

THE

Vanity of the World :

OR, B. LACY (B.)

The FOLLY of those who lead
Wicked and Profane LIVES, and yet
wish and desire to die *the Death of*
the Righteous.

Set forth in Sundry

DISCOURSES.

B. LACY.

*Love not the World, nor the Things of the
World.*

*If any Man love the World, the Love of the
Father is not in him. 1 Joh. ii. 15.*

L O N D O N :

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THE
PREFACE.



*H*E greatest Support of *Ab-surdity in Opinion, and Im-morality in Practice, is the Tyrant CUSTOM : It furnishes Mens Heads with false No-tions, and influences their Lives with evil Practices ; it imposes both upon their Under-standing and Will, and leads them out of the Way of Truth and Virtue. But it has still a greater and more prevailing Influence upon their Actions than upon their Sentiments, and their Lives suffer more by it than their Opinions ; for there are more Examples of Ill-living than of*

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Ill-thinking ; and there are far more Temptations in the World to Vice than to Error ; because, in our Opinions, we generally adhere to Antiquity ; whereas, in our Actions, we take a quite contrary Measure, and are apt to follow the Way of the vain World, and comply with the Fashion and Age wherein we live. And truly, this is the greatest Mischief that Authority or Custom can entail or derive upon the Minds of Men. If it did only put a Bar to the Increase of our Knowledge, this would be a more tolerable Evil ; (Knowledge, at best, being so inconsiderable, that it is scarce worth while to be concern'd about the Impediments of it) but since Custom and Example is an Enemy to Righteousness as well as to Truth, since it debauches Mens Morals as well as their Understandings, it's a meet Object of every wise Man's Censure and Condemnation, and might well make the Great Apostle, St. Paul, admonish the Romans, (and in them, all that profess Christianity in Truth and in Deed) not to be conform'd to this World, Rom. xii. 2. and this, upon a Supposition, that the Generality of Mankind are very wicked, that Sin bath many
Vassals

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Vassals, whereas Vertue is but slenderly attended; nay, I may venture to say, there is at present almost an universal Defection from it.

This World is frequently liken'd to a vast Stage or Theatre; but Things that are done upon this Stage, are commonly full of Confusion, frightful, and bloody: How many Commotions are there in the World, which (like Nature's Convulsion Fits) shake the Frame of the Universe, and seem to portend its Downfal? Who can number the open Oppressions and secret Frauds, with all the Arts of Cheating and Cozenage, daily practis'd amongst Men, to dispossess one another of their Rights? Who can imagine what treacherous Tricks are daily used (amongst even those that profess Dearness) to undermine one anothers Interests, or blast their Honour and Reputation? I need not cite the Courts of Princes for this, since there is scarce any Society of Men free from it: Hereunto if I should subjoin the unnatural Feuds of Relations, the Ingratitude of oblig'd Persons, the Treacheries of the Marriage-Bed, the Deceitfulness of

Friends, the ill Offices of Neighbours, the intolerable Practices of Revenge, (as they are generally carry'd on by the corrupt and vexatious Methods of the Laws, and by the common Malice of the World) what a Picture should I draw of Mankind? And were it possible one could be inform'd before-hand of all this, what good and rational Man could be content to be born into, or live in such a World.

But thus it was upon the Beginning of Things, thus it has been in all Ages, and thus it will be, until the Arch-Angels Trump at once shall awaken us from the Sleep of Death and Sin, and Time itself shall be no more. For no sooner had God finish'd his Creation, and declar'd all Things good therein, and began to take a Complacency in the Works of his own Hands, but, (thro' the Envy of the Devil) Sin came into the World, and untun'd the Proportions of its new-set Harmony; and being once planted in the World, it lik'd the Soil, and increas'd and multiply'd by the Care and Industry of Satan, as fast as Mankind could by the Blessing of God: Insomuch that God, (who was not long before

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represented by Moses, as creating Man upon the most considerate Pause of Deliberation) is now brought in as repenting himself that ever he made him; and accordingly, as the first Mark of his Displeasure, he shortens his Days; but that Course failing, he next goes on to a severer Judgment, and issues forth a Sentence to destroy him from off the Face of the Earth; for, God saw that the Wickedness of Man was great, and that every Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart, was Evil continually; nay, God look'd upon the Earth, and beheld it was corrupt; for all Flesh had corrupted his Way upon the Earth. And truly it's almost incredible to think to what a Pitch of Wickedness the World was arriv'd at in so short a Time. The World, then, was like abundance of our modern Sinners, Young in Years, but old in Debauchery. It look'd, as if the Devil, being just thrown out of Heaven, was in the Height of his Malice and Resentment; and, to retrieve again the lost Field, endeavour'd to augment his Numbers, and to strengthen his Party, by making Men as very Devils as himself: For Vice seem'd to reign absolute and uncontroll'd

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troll'd, and to have taken full Possession of the whole Earth ; so that (four Persons excepted) we read not of one good Man until Noah, which made St. Peter deservedly bestow that emphatical Character upon it, *The World of Iniquity*. But great Reason have we, that are Professors of the Cross of Christ, not to conform to the Vanities of this wicked World ; because, it is so unsafe for us to imitate it ; it is not a World for us to be conform'd unto : It is not safe following a Multitude at any Time, nor in any Thing, least of all, in the ordering of our Conversations ; it is an ill Guide in Matters of Opinion, but worse in Matters of Practice ; for the World is a mere Theater of Folly, a Stage of Vice, a Field of Blood and Cruelty ; and, to use St. John's Description, the whole World lieth in Wickedness, where it lies contentedly ; it is not only dipped or stained in the Water of Impurity, but is rather all over drench'd in 'em, like the Earth under the universal Deluge : Besides, if we be conform'd to this World, we shall not only countenance and encourage those we imitate, but we shall be a President to others, till Vice plead Prescription,

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scription, and Iniquity be establish'd by Law, so that we shall propagate Vice to our Successors, and so hazard the eternal Destruction of all our Posterity. Nay, our holy Religion requires a very different Method of Life from what worldly Men ordinarily practise, viz. Holiness unto the Lord.

The Precepts of Religion are strait, if not severe, and the Rewards of it high and noble ; such indeed as cannot be conceiv'd for their Greatness ; and they call both for a very exsellent and extraordinary Way of Conversation ; for, if we live, as the World doth, we shall neither obtain the one nor fulfil the other : To be a Christian, indeed, is to be a new Creature : Christians are Children of the Light and of the Day, Professors of that holy Religion, whose Precepts are good and Promises great ; so that we must not sleep as others, but watch and be sober. Above all, we must remember, that in our Baptism we solemnly renounc'd the World, with all the Pomps and Vanities of it, and strictly engag'd ourselves not to comply either with the Sins or Practices of it. The first Step to a Christian Life is to die

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to the World and the general Usages of it : If we will follow Christ, we must forsake the Multitude, and climb up to the Mount of Solitude and holy Separation. To encourage us whereunto, I have two Examples to offer : The first is that of righteous Lot, who happen'd to live in a City so prodigiously wicked and debauch'd, that it could not produce ten good Men in it ; and yet Lot, tho' he breath'd in so corrupt an Air, was not at all infected with it. The Health and Cleanness of his Soul (like that of Socrates's Body) was too strong for the Poison, and preserv'd him from the Malignity of a Plague that was more infectious and mortal too than that of Athens. Indeed the filthy Conversation of that wicked Place disturb'd his Quiet, but could not fully his Innocency ; it vex'd his righteous Soul, but could not debauch it ; his Company was devilish, but his Conversation angelical ; tho' he could not make them better, yet they could not make him worse ; he liv'd with them, but he did not partake of their Crimes.

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The second is the Example of Noah, who liv'd in a whole World that was as corrupt, nay more than Sodom. This City, in Lot's Time, could not produce ten righteous Persons ; but in Noah's Time, the whole World could not produce near that Number, not two ; as may reasonably be concluded from what God express'd, why he excepted him from the general Deluge : Thee have I seen Righteous in this Generation. Gen. vii. i. Now it's impossible that Vice should ever be more in Fashion than it was then, when the Text even saith, all Flesh had corrupted his Way upon the Earth, Gen. vi. 12, and the whole Earth was full of Violence : And yet in this all-over wicked World, Noah maintain'd his Innocency : And his Integrity shin'd forth as a Light in the midst of a perverse Generation ; and he was not only a Doer, but a Preacher of Righteousness. In other Ages of the World, tho' never so corrupt, Religion and Virtue have had some small Party of Followers, and the Singularity of living well was shar'd and deliver'd among several, and one pious Person was a Countenance and Encouragement to another ; but in this

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this Period of Time, a single Noah was fain to live (as Athanasius to dispute) against the whole World.

If now there be so much Danger in being conform'd to the World, and so much Reason not to love it, nor the Things of it, what a Madness is it to follow a Multitude to do Evil? Exod. xxiii. 2.

A Multitude is no safe Guide, and the Numbers of a Party do not always conclude the Goodness of a Cause; for you have read, that Vice has the Majority on its Side, and yet it is Vice still. I am sensible, they, who are not conformable to the World, must expect to fall under the Censure of Singularity and Preciseness; Worldlings will not only give them Nicknames, but may persecute them even with Hatred upon this Account. Thus we read in the 2d of Wisdom: Let us lie in Wait for the Righteous, because he is not for our Turn, and he is clean contrary to our Doings; he upbraids us with our offending the Law, and objecteth to our Infamy the Transgressions of our Educations: He was made to reprove our Thoughts; he is grievous unto us even to behold, for his

Life

Life is not like other Mens ; his Ways are of another Fashion ; that is, he lives otherwise, and better than we do ; and therefore we will hate and persecute him : But, by the Way, this Ground of their Hatred is very unreasonable ; for they are angry because the good Man doth not love their Company so well, as to be content to be damn'd for it. I think it's best to beg their Excuse in this Matter : If they would have us to do as they do, let them take Care to do as they shou'd do ; otherwise, we shall be guilty of most inexcusable Folly and Madness, if we forsake our Duty and our greatest Interest for such a trifling Discouragement ; for then we shall be of the Number of those inconsiderate Persons that love the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God.

My Intent, therefore, in this Preface, is to importune us all not to be led away with any Popularity, nor frightened from our Duty by the Condemnation of the Multitude ; for, to be sure, if we mean to acquit ourselves as Christians, we shall not be carry'd away in the polluted Torrent of the Age, nor be Fools for Company :

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pany : And then, if we can have the Approbation of the World, well ; if not, the Comfort is, we shall not much want it ; and we shall gain something by our Singularity, which the others cannot by their Numbers, the Favour of God, and Deliverance from the Wrath to come.

And if what is contain'd in the following Sheets may any Way tend to the effecting so good an End, I shall deem my Labour well laid out, and desire the Praise and Glory may be given to God alone.

Indeed I am well satisfy'd that there are many excellent Discourses extant upon all these Subjects ; still, I am sensible, that divine Truths cannot too often be inculcated, and sometimes a Fling of a Stone from a weak Hand may stab a Goliah in the Forehead ; besides, God may vouchsafe to discover that by the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings, in Knowledge, which he doth hide from, or not so fully communicate unto, the more wise and prudent ; at leastwise, Truths often repeated and impartially represented, have this happy Advantage :

tage; To make Impression at one Time when they do not another; and, consequently, the Salvation of but one single Soul, from the Error of his Way, is of so vast an Importance, that we ought to leave no Stone unturn'd, nor any good Means unattempted, tho' it were to gain but one. And therefore, oh! that I could but prevail upon those who shall read the following Discourses, to bring with them such a Seriousness of Mind and Spirit, as becomes those who desire, in earnest, to be sav'd: Then will they perceive, that, altho' they are compos'd in a plain and familiar Dress, therein is contain'd a great Truth of God; and that they are truly design'd (by God's Grace assisting) to engage all who read them to lead an universally godly and religious Life, and not to let the vain Pleasures of a transitory State, the Hopes of any worldly Advantage, or the Fear of any Loss or Sufferings, draw them into the wilful Commission of any known Sin, or unto the wilful Neglect of any known Duty.

Before I take my Leave, I am oblig'd, in the deepest Sense of Gratitude, to make this

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this publick Acknowledgment to my sundry Benefactors, for their cheerful and generous Benevolence to me and mine; and I beseech the Great God of Recompence to make them a plentiful Compensation of temporal Blessings, for all the seasonable Good they have thereby convey'd unto us; and finally, when he shall make up his Jewels, may he bind up their Souls in the Bundle of Life! This, as it is the most Sincere, is the highest Vow that I can make for their Happiness, who 'am, (with the greatest Respect)

Their most humble,

and most obedient Servant,

B. L A C Y.



A S E R-



S E R M O N.

Numb. xxiii, 10.

*Let me die the Death of the Righteous,
and let my last End be like his.*



However wicked and sinful Men, neither approve nor practise Virtue themselves, nor can patiently abide the Singularity of those that do ; however ungrateful the Restraints and Obligations of Religion seem, and appear to be ; however pleasant and entertaining, diverting and delightsome, the broad Way shews itself ; yet, when

the Consciences of such Men are set a little better to rights, and their Reason allow'd with more Seriousness and Application to exert itself, they begin to have a truer Sense and Relish of Things ; they will have a different View of Things ; and Virtue and Piety, which were before slighted, contemn'd, and scorn'd, will be better looked on ; and appear to be what they really are, very desirable and lovely Things ; and good Men, who were treated ignominiously, and reckon'd no other than a Parcel of credulous Fools and deluded Zealots, will be call'd by their right Names, and accounted the only wise Men. And as Virtue will be priz'd and valu'd, and good Men esteem'd the most Prudent and Wise ; so, on the contrary, Vice, which before took up all our Time, could command our Vigour and Estates, will look with a most ugly and deform'd Visage, and set our Hearts against it ; and its pretended Charms will be insipid, bitter, and distasteful.

Youth is a giddy, wild, and headstrong Age, and inconsiderably and rashly flies at all, without reflecting upon

upon Consequences ; it will neither listen to the wholesome Advice of Reason, nor the true Admonitions of Conscience, but commonly steers without either Rule or Compass ; and no Wonder then if it often miss its Way, and run many dreadful Risques and Hazards, engage in many gross Follies and Extravagancies : But when the Heat and Ebullition of Youth is a little over, and the Years of more Seriousness and Gravity come on, if Men will but then allow themselves to think and consider : (for 'tis not always, nor often they do so, even in that Age) But if they do, there is no Question to be made, but they will abhor their former Practices ; if from no other Reason, yet for the Danger they are by them expos'd to ; and will have a greater Opinion of a virtuous Life and Behaviour, from the Calmness and Quiet of Conscience, that attends them. Or suppose, when the Heat and Inconsiderateness of Youth is over, and Men are arriv'd at the Years of Discretion and Prudence, and yet, thro' their old Custom of Sinning, and their Affections being too deeply engag'd in

the World, they have no Mind to Virtue, or cannot easily bring themselves into a Temper for it ; yet they could heartily wish, that their temporal Interests were reconcileable with a godly Life ; that they could serve their Lusts and their God, for the vast Hopes and Expectation of a future Reward, which such a Life naturally possesses Mens Minds withal. Or if such Thoughts as these should not sometime break in upon them in the Time of Health, Vigour, and Firmness of Strength, which is hardly possible to the most Inconsiderate ; yet, when Sickness comes upon them, and acute Distempers seize, and they appear to be upon a Venture and in great Danger ; when the wrinkled Cheeks, the bald Pate, the benumb'd and feeble Limbs, with all the Infirmitie's of old Age, come on, and points to the Church-yard ; and, as it were, assigns them the Place, where, in a little Time, they must make their Bed, and take up their Lodgings ; the very Nearness of the Prospect of such a considerable Change, will take off their Appetite from worldly Pleasures and Advantages ; they will not

not then need many Arguments to convince them of their Vanity and Unprofitableness, but with no small Remorse of Conscience, and Sorrow of Heart for their mispent Time, will heartily wish they had taken such wise Measures, as might have given better Hopes, and more Comfort at the Approach of Death ; or however, have open'd to them the Scene of a vast and endless Eternity, with less of Terror and Astonishment.

Whatsoever mean Opinions they might harbour of good Men formerly ; and charge them with Folly for the Strictnesses and Severities of a religious Life, and, perhaps, laugh at them for their Zeal and Devotion ; yet at such Seasons, their Consciences will tell them, that such have been the only wise Men, and themselves the only Fools, who have liv'd inconsiderately and vainly, without ever reflecting what the Issue and Upshot of all would be. If ever Men will be serious, the Approach of Death will make them so ; and if they have liv'd licentiously, a fair Consideration of their State will then be but very Uncomfortable,

because they have but little Space or Time to rectify Miscarriages, or make Amends, by future Obedience, for a whole Life of Sin. And those to whom Death has made his Approaches in such a State, being startled with the Outcries of a clamorous Conscience, and now having perfectly another Prospect of Things than in the Days of Prosperity and Strength, would be glad, by any Means, to thrust themselves into the Number of the Righteous, and to fall in Heirs with them of that State of Happiness, of which they have seldom or ever attentively thought in their Life-time; would most ardently and passionately desire to go out of the World, with the same Hope and Expectation that they do: *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his.*

I. I shall explain wherein the Nature of this passionate Wish consists, *Let me, &c.*

II. Shall shew the Ineffectualness of such Measures, to procure such an End.

For

For, to desire, or wish to be in the happy State and Condition of the Righteous, when Men go out of this World, without making Use of other Means, is very impertinent and unprofitable.

i. I shall explain wherein the Nature of this passionate Wish consists. *Let me die, &c.* I shall not consider these Words of the Wish particularly as *Balaam's*, but extend them to the Desire of all Sorts of Persons at their Dying; and chiefly of those that are great Offenders.

Indeed, the Substance of this earnest and passionate Wish, aims at good and noble Ends, and what may well be used by the best of Christians, at, or not long before their Death, or at any Part of their Life; but what is culpable, is the Lateness of the Thing, without taking any proper Methods beforehand: For without all Controversy, nothing can be more desirable, nor have we greater Reason to desire or wish for any one Thing more, than to depart out of this World with the same Hopes and Expectations that the Righteous do, and to deliver up our Souls in-

to the Hands of a good and merciful God.

The Text consists of two Propositions, varying a little in the manner of Expression, but exactly agreeing in Sense, and Meaning : *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his.* i. e. Let me go out of the World with the same Hopes and Expectation of Happiness, that every righteous Man doth ; this is the utmost of my Desires, and the farthest Extent of my Wish : If I could but compass thus much, I could freely and chearfully resign my Soul, depart out of this World, and lay me down in my Grave.

Now for these following Reasons, such a Desire, or Wish, goes upon good Grounds ; and there is nothing wanting to make it, in the highest Degree, reasonable, but the Defect of Application to such Means as are, in their Nature, proper to compass such an End.

To be sure, 'tis the best State and Condition that a Man possibly can be in, to depart out of this World in the same State and Condition that a righteous Man doth.

For

For, 1. he has answer'd the Ends and Desires of his Creation, by his Life and Conversation.

2. He has minded those Things most, that most concern him ; and has taken care of the one Thing necessary.

3. He has made his Peace with God, who can be his best Friend or his worst Enemy.

4. And lastly, because he has acted so agreeable to the Intentions of his Creation, and minded those Things most that are of greatest Moment and Concern to him ; and by taking such wise Measures, made his Peace with God ; he may expect, as a Reward for the Discharge of his Duty, through the Merits of Christ, that God will withhold no Degree of Happiness from him, which his Diligence and Faithfulness have deserv'd.

1. He has answer'd the Ends and Designs of his Creation, by his Life and Conversation. God did never make Mankind to live according to their own Fancy and Humour, but he intended and design'd his own Honour and Glory in the Creation of them ; and propos'd to us Rules to walk by and

and observe, that thereby his Name might be exalted on the Earth ; and therefore we are under the strictest Obligations to set forth his most worthy Praise.

As we are his Creatures, and the Workmanship of his Hands, therefore no less can be expected from us, than that we should reverence and honour the Author and Giver of our Being ; we expect thus much from any notable Piece of our own Contrivance and Make, that the Honour of the Performance should redound to our selves ; and upon far stronger Reasons may God expect to be glorified, by such an exquisite Skill as he has shew'd in the excellent Structure and Composition of our Bodies ; which is so wonderful, that it demands the highest Degrees of Admiration, as well as Gratitude.

'Tis true, God is a Being of that infinite Perfection, as not to be capable of any Addition of Happiness, by our most devout and sincere Service ; but however, he has been pleas'd to require it of us, and accept it, to the Advancement of our Happiness ; and for that End, and to that End, has given us Precepts

Precepts to walk by, which in themselves are most highly reasonable; what does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do Justice, and love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? As also the due Observation of them is most profitable to us, for in keeping of them there is great Reward; so that Man has a double Obligation to fulfil the Divine Laws; because they are reasonable; and because they are profitable to him.

But our Obligations diligently to serve and worship God still increase, if we consider, that his Providence every Moment sustains us; for in him we live, move, and have our Being. If we call to Mind, that from him every good and perfect Gift cometh; whatever we enjoy, or whatever we expect to enjoy, has come, or can only come from his bountiful Hand; and therefore we can do no less; Self-preservation, and our own Interest, bind us, in the highest Manner, to respect and reverence such a Benefactor, and to make our utmost Endeavours, whatever we do, in some Kind or other, to propose to our selves the advancing the

Glory

Glory and Honour of so good and liberal a Creator, and to accept his Benefits, with the greatest Degree of Thankfulness and Gratitude.

Upon these, and the like Considerations and Reflections, all Men that make a due Use of the Sense and Reason that God has endow'd them withal, employ it to the Honour of their Maker, their Sovereign, and their Lord; they know he is worthy to reap, and expects to do so, where he has sown; and will look for a proportionable Crop, where he has been at such Care in Tillage. If God has given them a quick Understanding, a sound Judgment, a large and capacious Soul, how can they be better employ'd, or dare they be otherwise employ'd, than to the Honour of the Giver? And therefore every prudent and good Man lays himself and all his Abilities out to such Purposes and Ends as may best serve the Intention of his Creation, i.e. the Honour and Glory of God; and does not account himself to have parted with any of his Time wisely and profitably, which does not in some Way tend to his great Creator's Praise.

He considers the Reason for which he came into the World, and endeavours to answer the Designs of it ; he remembers, that he was made to serve and worship his Maker ; that he was not made to fulfil his own Will and Pleasure, but the Will of his Father, which is in Heaven ; that the World is not a Place intended for Happiness, but only of Trial and Probation ; that such Persons as have given Proof here, that they are God's true and faithful Servants, shall hereafter enter into the Joy of their Lord ; and this animates and gives Life to his Endeavours, and makes him zealous to spread the great and glorious Name of God far and wide ; that his Will may be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven : Whatever the World says and thinks of him, he is not discourag'd in his Designs, and may reply in those Words our Saviour used upon another Occasion, *Wist ye not, I must be about my Father's Business ?* And thus the righteous Man makes his best Advantage of the chief End and Design of his Creation, which is truly and faithfully to serve God, and endeavour his utmost to please

please him, has acquitted such a Part of his Duty, as may give him a great Portion of Comfort in the Presence of God.

2. Another Degree of Peace and Comfort that the righteous Man has a Title to, arises from the Consideration, that he has minded those Things most which most concern him, and has taken Care of the One Thing necessary: He has not liv'd, as a great many rash unthinking Men do, without any Aim, or Design at all in his Actions, but has proposed to himself the happy Issue of a good Life, and the dangerous Consequences of a bad one; that the first will end in eternal Happiness, and the latter in as eternal Misery; and he is wiser than to pitch upon the worse Side, when he may safely engage on the better; when Heaven and Hell are put to his Choice, there's no Need to deliberate which to choose: The Difference is so considerable, there is no room for Debate; when he sees the Kingdom of Heaven at Hand, nothing else can have any Force of Temptation to make him turn his Back of it: He makes it his whole Care, and the

the full Stream of his Desires are directed to that Purpose, to make himself as secure of Happiness as he can ; he over-looks worldly Interests with Slight and Contempt, when they offer themselves upon Conditions that he cannot agree to : Shall all the glittering Grandeur and Pomp of the World, all its most promising Pleasures and Delights, draw me into a Snare and Hazard, who have an immortal Soul to save ? Shall I venture a Thing of infinite Value, for a Trifle in Comparison ? Shall I be tempted to Wrong or Injustice, to the infinite Hazard and Danger of my better Part, which must live for ever, and must be Miserable or Happy for that Duration, according to the Wisdom or Folly of my Life ? I hate Fraud, Deceit, and unjust Dealing, even when I could practise them to Advantage, and when 'tis in the Power of my Hand to do them ; for if for such like Practices I can't be call'd to Account, it may be, by Men, yet God both sees and will judge for them : His Vengeance is unavoidable ; therefore the Cries of the Wrong'd and Fatherless shall never enter into the

the Ears of God against me ; my Conscience shall be clear from this great Offence, and if I take but care to maintain my Integrity, herein to exercise my self, to have a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men ; then, through the Mercies of God, I hope to lay me down in Peace, and to descend, not with Sorrow, but with Comfort, and the Hopes of a glorious Resurrection, into my Grave ; my Soul then shall rest in Hope, and willingly wait for the Revelation of that dreadful Day, when our blessed Lord and Saviour shall come, in the Glory of the Father, to reward every Man according to his Works ; and now to depart out of this World with so clear and unspotted a Conscience, without prevaricating with one's Duty, or making it a Stalking-horse to come at our Interests and temporal Advantages, to have minded those Things most that most concern us, and to keep aloof from the Temptations of the World, and to make it our greatest Regard carefully and conscientiously to discharge our Duty to God and Men ; it leaving so much Calmness and Quiet upon

upon our Minds at a dying Hour, and furnishing us with such a plentiful Spring of Hopes of a happy Eternity ; it must be a very desirable State and Condition for any Person to be found in, when his Days are spun out to their Length, and the Sexton, old Time, is taking the Dimensions of his Grave.

3. The righteous Man has made his Peace with God, who can be his best Friend, or his greatest Enemy, according to his Behaviour. Mankind has nothing to dread, no Mischief to apprehend from those that want the Power to do any ; tho' some be maliciously bent against us, yet if they have not Power to execute their Wrath, we are safe enough ; but if we enrage him against us, to whom Vengeance belongeth, we have no Security : There is no Safe-guard against the Blow.

For that Cause there is no Reason to fear them that can destroy the Body, and after that have no more that they can do ; *but I say unto you, fear him, who after he hath kill'd, hath Power to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell.* Here is a good Argument for Fear, and

an awful Care not to offend, if Men be not too big for it; and there are none so big, but they are little enough to be judg'd.

But the righteous Man hath wisely secur'd himself against all Danger, and he has got that Advantage over this fear of Vengeance, which all Men must be haunted with, who have not taken care to reconcile themselves to God; that by a diligent and industrious Obedience he has made him his Friend, and can say cheerfully, and with strong Hopes, grounded upon the Revelation of God's Will, at the nearer Approaches of Death, *Into thy Hands I commend my Spirit, for thou hast redeemed it, O Lord my God.*

And lastly, because he has acted agreeable to the Intentions of his Creation, and minded those Things most, that are of most Moment and Concern to him, and by taking such wise Measures, made his Peace with God; he may expect, as a Reward for the Discharge of his Duty, through the Merits of Christ, that God will withhold no Degree of Happiness from him, which his Diligence and Faithfulness have deserv'd.

And

And that God will answer these Hopes, is so agreeable to the Nature of his Justice and Goodness, and the express Revelation of his Will, that there is no manner of Doubt to be made about it. *Him that honoureth me,* says God by his Prophet, *I will honour;* and he that does not, shall be lightly esteem'd. And the Psalmist tells us, *verily there is a Reward for the Righteous.*

God will judge every Man according to his Works; *To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for honour, and glory, and immortality, eternal life;* but unto them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath; tribulation and anguish upon every soul that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God. Rom. 2.6,7, &c.

And St. Paul speaks yet with greater Assurance in relation to his future State, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.* Henceforth there is laid up for me a

crown of righteousness, which God the righteous judge will give me at that day.

2 Tim. 4. 7, 8.

And this is the last Reason I propos'd to give, for the Desirableness of the State of righteous and good Men, when they are upon their Journey for another World; and it appears very plainly, that their State is very well worth desiring, and deserves to be wished for, if that alone wou'd be an effectual Means to gain it.

And this brings me in the second Place, to shew the Ineffectualness of such Measures to procure such an End. For to desire and wish to be in the happy State and Condition of the Righteous, when they go out of this World, without the Use of other Means, is very impertinent and vain.

Heaven is not to be compass'd upon such easy Terms; the Way to it is a long and leisurely Ascent; Men are not to be convey'd to Honour from their Death-beds, because they heartily desire or wish to be at that happy Place; if such loose and large Terms as these were granted, 'tis likely few would infi carry, unless such Persons as

as were hurry'd out of the World, without having Space given to consider whither they were going, or died in a Fit of Distraction, or insensible as to the Nearness of Death, or the Greatness of the Danger: But no such large Terms are granted to those who have a Mind of Heaven; there is no Way to it but by a sincere and hearty Repentance, and constant Obedience to the Laws of God, after we have repented. But I tell you, *nay, except ye Repent ye shall all likewise perish;* and this is a faithful Saying, and these Things I will, that thou constantly affirm, that they that have believed in God, be careful to maintain good Works. And it is likewise said, that *he that endureth to the end, shall be saved;* which Words must suppose some foregoing Time of the Man's Trial, that he has long stick'd close to the Practice of the Gospel, and retain'd the Stedfastness of his Faith against all Opposition and Temptation; which can never be imagin'd to happen to a Man, that only begins his Christian Life and Repentance when and where he should end it.

I speak not this to make Men despair of the Effectualness of their Repentance, even upon their Death ; if they have been such Fools to put Matters to this Hazard, they have no Plank to save themselves on, but Repentance ; tho' in truth 'tis only a Plank after Shipwreck, and the Hopes of being saved is most miserably small, and so little to be relied upon, that a Man cannot possibly make a greater Venture, unless he violently make away himself ; but I speak it to enforce Repentance upon Men, when they have more Time upon their Hands, and better Opportunities, thro' the Patience and Long-suffering of God to work out their Repentance. For 'tis the greatest Odds, whether they (at the Time of Death) can repent truly and effectually, or no : And 'tis a Hazard then, whether God will grant the Pardon of their Sins, tho' they seek it diligently, and with Tears ; since they only then begin to make Application to the Throne of God's Mercy, when the Terrors of Death come on apace, or they, thro' Sicknes, are disabled from serving their Lusts and Sins any longer. God then

then is much oblig'd to them for their Repentance, and turning to him ; for their firmly believing his Word, and depending only upon the Merits of his Son for Salvation, to whom they would not listen nor obey all their Life-time. Are the Offers of such late Service, think you, very acceptable to God at such a Time ? No, 'tis very much to be fear'd not. As great a Joy as there shall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, 'tis much to be fear'd, that such late Repentance seldom occasions such Joy. For 'tis only the Terrors of Hell, and the Apprehension of Judgment, and the Dread of the heavy Indignation of God, that puts a Man upon such Repentance ; which when they go alone, without a perfect Change of Life, and a stedfast Resolution of future Obedience, the Truth of which is confirm'd by a suitable Life, can but at best give very mean Hopes of a Man's Salvation, if they do give any. I am very loth to say the worst, but the Case in truth is too desperate, for any Man that has the least Regard to his Soul, to venture on it. I would as willingly have as large Apprehensions

of the Mercies of God, as any Man; but do believe he will seldom show that Fondness for Sinners, as to receive them into Heaven upon a Wish just before they leave this Earth ; and take those into his Glory, who could never abide to think of him, or take Notice of his Offers of Salvation all their Lives. But before I descend more particularly to consider the Dangers of a Late Repentance, let us consider distinctly what a Sort of Repentance it is a Man can make upon his Death-bed, or when he is at no great Distance from his Grave.

He has liv'd foolishly and inconsiderately all his Life, and contracted a vast Load of Sin upon his Conscience; and all this he has done under the Dispensation of the Gospel (for I speak of Christians who have liv'd wickedly under the Gospel Profession, to whom Life and Immortality are brought to Light through the Gospel.) If Christ had not spoken to us, then we might have made some Pretence, some Excuse; but now there is no Cloak for our Sin.

Those

Those that never heard of the Gospel will come off better; for how should they believe in him, of whom they never heard? But we who have had the Doctrine of Christ press'd upon us from Time to Time, and have never been any whit amended or reform'd by it, this is a prodigious Reproach upon us, as well as a vast heightening of our Sin. And for Men to live wicked and profane Lives, against all this Light and Knowledge, for their whole Lives, and a little before their Death to think of Repentance, and being reconcil'd to God, is but a Sort of Mockery: Who will hear such a ones Prayer, or what will his Humbling profit him? There is little or no Foundation for Happiness to be hoped for in such a Case; he must go out of the World with a great deal of Doubt and Distrust at best.

The Man now has wallow'd his whole Life in Sensuality and Profaneness, in a Neglect of God and Religion; let us see, therefore, how great a Penitent it is, in all Probability, possible for him to be, when he comes to die, and is about to enter into his eternal State.

State. Why, now the Prospect of Death, and the Apprehensions of a future strict Account, that must be given by him, compel him into a nearer Consideration of his State ; he now has a different View of Things to what he had formerly ; his Conscience tells him, in plain Words, that he has liv'd very foolishly, and very unchristianly ; that he has run into a prodigious deal of Sin and Wickedness ; and swell'd the Accounts, he must shortly give, to a vast Bulk and Magnitude ; he has so miserably manag'd that Stewardship, wherewith he was intrusted, and misemploy'd the Talents committed to his Charge, that as he can give no just Account, so he dare not venture into the Presence of his great Master to give any ; he knows not how to appear before him, nor what Answer to give to the Questions that shall be ask'd him ; but being inform'd, that the Master, whom he serv'd, or should have serv'd, is merciful, he pitches upon it as the best Expedient ; he acknowledges his Faults, and petitions his Master to pass over what is past, to look upon him here as a faithful Servant, and prefer

fer him *as such* : Would any Master, think you then, upon such a Request, after a whole Life spent in Villainy, prefer or advance such a Servant, allow him his Countenance, or the least Favour ? Doubtless, he would cast him into Prison, till he had paid the utmost Farthing.

Just of the same Nature is the Case of an old and harden'd Offender ; he is never troubled with any Sowerness or Remorse of Conscience, 'till the Time of giving in his Accounts draws on ; he can, without any Qualms of Conscience, cheat, lie, defraud, profane God's holy Name and his Word, if to his Advantage, and make Religion it self a Cloak for his Sins ; dissemble it for his Interest, when the more bare-fac'd Way of Cheating will not serve his Turns, and make it a meer *Time-server*.

But now, when the Days of our worldly Gain are drawing towards an End ; now he would tack about, and pass for a good Man and a Penitent : Live as he list while he lives, and have his Desire when he comes to Die, and so reconcile all Interests, enjoy the World while

while he lives, and gain Heaven when he dies.

When old Age, Sickness, or the like, give him Warning of his approaching Death ; then it comes into his Mind to endeavour to procure God's Pardon—
Then God be merciful to me a Sinner.
And thus it appears to be his Design, to serve his Sins as long as he can, and to gain the Favour of God when he can do nothing else.

And what Favour God may show to such a Penitent, I shall not positively determine, but leave him to the Mercy of God, upon which it seems he has so much and so presumptuously relied ; but thus much I must needs say, that if it please God to make him sincerely Penitent, and accept him, 'tis more than he or any in the World could reasonably look for ; and he has but one Example upon Record, to give the least Encouragement, since the Creation of the World : The Thief upon the Cross.

I must beg the Liberty to speak more plainly upon this Matter, because the Generality of the World leaves the Hopes of their Happiness to this very Chance,

Chance, and have a Mind, as it were, to depend upon one single Dice for their Salvation, and to venture their Happiness upon one single and doubtful Point, upon which a wise Man would not venture the most worthless Thing. But God, who knows the Hearts of Men, can interpret the Reason of such Proceedings very readily : Him you intend to serve in the last Place ; any Time, if they have but the least Time, will serve for such a Purpose ; a dying Breath will almost waft them to him. But he that sitteth in Heaven shall laugh them to Scorn, the Lord shall have them in Derision.

Has God so fully declar'd his Will to Mankind, and has it so little Effect ? Has he now commanded all Men every where to repent, and will they choose their own Time for it ? If they choose their own Time of Repentance, he will choose his own Time of Acceptance ; he has laid himself under no Obligation to receive Sinners when they repent, if they will be their own Carvers, and choose their own Time of Repentance : *To Day if you will bear his Voice, karden not your Hearts;* if

If the present Time be neglected, whether he will accept us at another, lies in his own Breast. He may do as he pleases, and 'tis too likely that those who have been so often call'd and invited into the Arms of his Mercy, to no Effect or Purpose, will not be receiv'd by him when they most earnestly desire it. All the Day long have I stretch'd out my Arms to a stiffneck'd and rebellious People ; and when the Day is spent, and the Evening of Old Age coming on apace, there is some Reason to be afraid, least his Patience should be worn out, and he *swear in his Wrath*, that we *shall not enter into his Rest* ; For, why should God so much contend and strive with Man for his own Good ? If Mercy and Patience cannot move him to repent for his own Interest, he cannot complain if Judgment overtake him, and the Hand of Forbearance be chang'd into a Hand of Fury. If Men cannot be drawn by the Cords of Love, 'tis fair Dealing to chastise them with Scourges ; and to let them feel the Weight of his Indignation, if they will not be persuaded into Duty with abundance of Love.

Consider

Consider this, ye that have forgot God, least he pluck you away suddenly, without any Hopes of Deliverance or Relief: Make your Peace with God in an acceptable Time, and defer not till Death to be justified : Lay out the remaining Part of your Days prudently and discreetly, and venture not an Eternity upon a Death-bed ; think not you can then as securely bequeath your Souls to Heaven, as you can dispose of your Estates to your Friends. In the Time of Health, think of Repentance, and venture not the Care of your Soul ; all your Hopes of eternal Happiness, to a Death-bed ; to a *Let me die the death of the Righteous*, &c.

I come now to examine more particularly the Dangers of a Death-bed Repentance, and to do this as distinctly as I can, I will consider,

I. Wherein the Nature of Repentance consists. And,

II. I then shall shew how incapable any Man is to perform that Work, after a whole Life spent in Vanity and Folly, in his declining Age,
in

in the severe Visitations of Sick-
ness, or on his Death-bed.

I consider wherein the Nature of Repentance consists ; and because the Vulgar is very apt to mistake it, and to be impos'd upon with the Counterfeite for the True, I shall lay it out as plain as I can.

Repentance is a hearty and sincere Sorrow, arising from the Consideration that we have offended God.

There are several Sorts and Kinds of Sorrow, according to the great Variety of the Objects that may move them ; but a penitent Sorrow is distinguis'd from the rest, in that it particularly has relation to God, and our Reconciliation with him ; we have been deficient in our Duty, and have *left undone those Things which we ought to have done* ; nay, not only have been wanting in our Duty, but practis'd the contrary Sins, in manifest Opposition to it ; *we have done those Things which we ought not to have done* ; and upon a serious Reflection on these our unhappy Circumstances, Shame, that we have offended so good a God, and the

Desire

desire of Self-preservation, because we have offended so mighty and powerful an One, raise great Passions of Grief and Trouble in our Soul, and stir up an earnest Longing in it, to procure his Favour and Pardon ; and as we have provok'd him against us by our Sins, and as whatever we have done in that Kind, is not to be undone in proper Speech, so there is one Kind of undoing it, by being deeply sorrowful, and by lamenting our Misfortune of being engag'd in every particular Sin ; by expressing as much Grief for our Wickednesses, as we have formerly taken Pleasure in their Acting ; by hating, loathing, and detesting of them, and making the very Memory of them bitter and ungrateful to us. And to this End it will be absolutely necessary, to be as fully sensible as we can of the Number, Greatness, and aggravating Circumstances of all Sins in general, and of particular Sins ; and therefore we must make a diligent Search into our Life and Conversation ; consider our Ways, all the crooked Turnings and Windings of our Paths ; how often we have broken God's Commands with little or no

Temptation ; nay, have sought out Temptations, and willingly been en-snar'd. How long we have continued stubborn and rebellious, notwithstanding all the Admonitions, Exhortations, Promises, and Threats of the Gospel ; notwithstanding the frequent Warnings of our Danger from the Suggestions of Conscience, the Motions of the Holy Spirit for Information and Amendment ; notwithstanding all the kind Calls and Invitations of the holy Scriptures, yet we would not be prevail'd upon, even for our own Good, to discharge our Duty. These and the like Circumstances, be they more or less in our Actions, they proportionably augment or take away from the Foulness and Baseness of our Crimes, and will encrease or lessen the Degrees of Repentance ; the fouler and blacker Sins are, they will require a more plentiful Shower of Tears to wash them away ; and the lesser they are, a lesser Shower will do ; however, we can never do too much, and we may easily do too little, in a Matter of such Import and Concern. But I fear our Sins are not of that Nature, as that a small Repen-tance

tance will blot them out, and gain God's Pardon ; and little Reason we shall have to think it will, if we look back upon our Lives from our earliest Knowledge of Religion, down to these present Days. Have we liv'd according to the Promise we made in our baptismal Vow, 1. To renounce the Devil, the World, and the Flesh ? Have we fully done this, or used our best Endeavours to do this ? Have we answer'd the Design of our Creation, in honouring, praising, and glorifying God ? Does a Joy always spring up in our Hearts, when we are a going to Worship him ? Can we say with the Psalmist, *I was glad when they said unto me, we will go into the House of the Lord ?* Have we used all Means to satisfy the Ends of our Redemption, that the Blood of Christ should not be spilt for us to no Purpose, or any Benefit of ours ? Have we diligently obey'd his Glory, since we were so happy as to know it, and the Duties therein contain'd ? In short, have we made it our chief Care to serve God truly and faithfully, and honestly to discharge our Duty to Men ?

With these and the like Questions we may compose our selves in our private Meditations, and so far satisfy our selves, as to know in what Method to proceed to Repentance, and nearly conjecture what Degrees of it will serve our Turn. *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things ; beloved if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* 1 John 3. 20, 21. But 'tis but too probable, that in these and a many the like Particulars our Heart will condemn us in some Kind or other.

Let us therefore, in the second Place, apply our selves to God with sorrowful Hearts and troubled Minds, that we have been so negligent of our Duty ; let us own all our Sins and Transgressions to God, and fairly lay out our Crimes, without concealing, excusing, or dissembling any ; and rather expose our Guilt, than offer to garnish it over.

Let us judge our selves honestly and justly, that we be not judg'd of God ; and pour out our Souls to God for our Sins, with their blackest and most height-

heightening Circumstances. St. Paul tells us, *That Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners, of whom he owns himself to be the chiefest.* And if that great Apostle could say so much of himself, in what Degree of Sinners do we account our selves to stand? There is no prevaricating with God, no imposing upon him, no keeping him in Ignorance of the Foulness of our Crimes.

If we know our selves to be guilty of base and horrid Sins, God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all Things; therefore 'tis in vain for any Man to palliate or cloak his Sins, or any Degrees of them. If any Man say, that he has no Sin, or would appear to be a less Offender than he really is, all is to no Purpose, he deceives himself, and the Truth is not in him; but the Way to gain Pardon, is faithfully to declare our Sins to God, not in the least concealing their Ugliness and Deformity: For if we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness. No Man addresses himself to the Physician for Cure, but truly discovers, as

far as he is able, the State of his Distemper; if we address our selves to God, and do not discover our whole Indisposition to that grand Physician of our Souls, 'tis but a sort of Mockery. How can he think we heartily desire to be healed and cured of our Infirmitie? But if we faithfully lay before him all the Diseases of our Souls, he will not be wanting to apply proper Balsams to every Malady.

3. When we have proceeded thus far, let us be heartily and deeply troubled under the great Sense and Weight of our Sins: Let the Heart mourn, and the Eyes flow down with Tears, because we have not kept God's holy Laws; such a Course is very promising of good Success. *A broken and a contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not refuse.*

After St. Peter had denied his Lord and Master, he went out and wept bitterly, and, upon his Repentance, was receiv'd.

God said, *Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself* (when he fasted and put on Sackcloth) *I will not bring the evil in his days, but in his sons days will I bring it,*

it, because he submitteth himself before me: When Men humble themselves, (and the lowest Degree of Humility is to mourn greatly for their Sins) 'tis the first Thing that turneth away God's Wrath, and maketh a Man at Peace with him. And as it is the surest and readiest Way to move God to take Pi-ty and Compassion upon us, so is it the likeliest afterward to keep us in his Favour. If we be grievously troubled for our Sins, it will make us hate and abhor them, because, through them, we offend against so good and gracious a God, and make such unworthy Re-turns for all the Riches of his Mercies; and this Consideration will still, if homely applied, encrease our Sorrow, which ought, as far as may be, to be equal to the Greatness and Provocati-on of our Guilt; and the greater this Grief is, provided a Man do not run himself into Despair by it, it is always the more acceptable; and the more this Grief is prest upon his Soul, it will make him the more fearful to offend afterward; when he has once felt the Stings of an accusing Conscience, he will not so soon venture upon those

Sins that may wound it again ; and this will arm him against all Temptations ; for let them promise what Pleasures they will, they can never equal the Smart of an accusing Conscience. Let it therefore be our Care to bring our Hearts into this sorrowful Temper for our Sins ; and that not only for the certain Mischief they expos'd us to, for that is no true Motive to Obedience where it goes alone, but let us endeavour to raise up in our Souls an unfeigned Love of God for all his Mercies, and that will wound our Soul with bitter Sorrow, when we consider all the Sins we have committed have been against infinite Love and Goodness. Let us therefore remember all the Mercy and loving Kindness of God to us, and in an especial manner, his great Forbearance in not taking us off in the middle of our Sins ; when we have liv'd so long under the Profession of the Gospel, and the Endearments of his Love, under the comfortable Benefits of his holy Sacraments, and not yet very visibly, or much profited by them ; for the negligent Use of which, he might very justly, have long since

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cut us off from Life, and given us our Portion with Hypocrites and Sinners. Pray what Account can we give of God's having spar'd us so long, but only his tender Mercies towards us? Is it a new Thing to us, to see Men die in the middle of their Sins? Have we not known Men taken out of the World, without having the Time to consider whither they were going, or to ask God Forgiveness; or however, not Time enough to give them any comfortable Hopes at their Departure? And why might not we have been some of those? Or what Accusation could we lay against God if he should deal so by us? Like the Man that wanted the wedding Garment, we must be Dumb, we have nothing to say for our selves. But God has been pleas'd hitherto to spare us; he that willeth not the Death of a Sinner, has given us longer Space for Repentance. The Consideration of this, if our Hearts have not taken the Hardness of the flinty Rock, must actuate our Hearts to love so gracious a God, and make us break out with the Apostle, *O the Riches of the Goodness and long Suffering of*

of God ! and at the same Time convince us, That it is an evil and a bitter thing that we have forsaken the Lord.

Jer. 2. 19. That we have rebelled against such Love, and sinned against such Goodness ; it must make us both blush and enrag'd at our selves at once, that we have been such ungrateful Wretches and hardy Villains, as not to be perswaded to Duty by all the Endearments of Love, nor frighted into it by all the Terrors of his Threatnings.

And then, fourthly, when we have proceeded thus far in a godly Sorrow, which worketh Repentance unto Salvation not to be repented of ; when we have open'd the Sluices of Sorrow for our Sins past, it will be Time to take up firm Resolutions of proving the Truth and Sincerity of our Repentance, by a good Life, and in the Sight of God and Men unblameable, as far as human Frailty, (which at best is but an imperfect Obedience,) will permit ; and as we must resolve against every particular Sin, so ought we the most to do, where we most observe our weak Side and our Failings to lie. And above

bove all we must take care, that these Resolutions be from the Bottom of our Heart ; not such Resolutions as sick Persons sometimes make, who after they recover, directly fall to their old Way of Living, without ever rememb'ring their Vows of Amendment ; nor such Resolutions as are very commonly made when Men receive the Holy Sacrament, which they either never design to observe, or it afterward appears they do not.

For you may take this for granted, that whosoever comes to this Holy Table, without a perfect Abhorrence of Sin, comes not duely prepar'd ; and that he that does entirely hate Sin, will be sure to forsake it ; for no one can abide to practice what he hates ; and therefore before you eat this Bread, or drink this Cup, fully examine your self ; resolve so against Sin, to hate and detest it, as that you may be accepted of God ; as that from henceforth, you will walk in his most holy Ways, honour his most holy Name and his Word ; and when you have receiv'd the Holy Eucharist, make it appear to the World, that your Resolutions of future

future Obedience are sincere. Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

And since I am speaking of the Holy Sacrament, give me Leave briefly to admonish you what are the proper Qualifications to such a Purpose.

And here I shall not have Occasion to remind you, that you must thoroughly repent you of your Sins, for this I have done already.

If you do not heartily and entirely renounce all Sin, you cannot be fit Partakers; and as you must renounce it, so you must avoid all Temptations or Occasions that may draw you to it: You must not only resolve to forsake the Sins, but now abhor and detest 'em. He that lives in his Sins, or hath not quite cast off his Affections to 'em, or some of 'em, is as yet dead in Trespasses: And the holy Sacrament is spiritual Food, and therefore no fit Nourishment to those that are dead in Sins and Trespasses: It is true, such a Man may eat the Bread and drink the Wine, but instead of receiving the Benefit of it, he eats and drinks his own Damnation;

tion ; but yet this cannot excuse a Man from Receiving : Why does he not forsake those Sins that render him unfit ? Such Excuses will not pass.

2. You must endeavour to possess yourselves of all the Graces and Virtues ; use your utmost to cloath yourselves with the Wedding-Garment, that you may be a fit Guest at such a heavenly Feast : Make yourselves truly humble, by considering your many and great Sins. By Faith lay hold on God's Promises, made to you in the Gospel ; and take Care especially to put on Charity, a most excellent Cloathing to make you meet Partakers of this heavenly Feast. Forgive all Men their Trespasses, as you expect Forgiveness of yours ; as likewise be ready to be reconcil'd to your Brother, if he have ought against you, as by making Restitution for Wrongs, Injuries, or the like ; for tho' he may be so good a Christian as to forgive thee, yet thou ought to be fully satisfy'd of all this, by making thy Application to him, and doing him Justice, or what he pleases to accept, and then thou mayest come, and bring thy Gift to the Altar.

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Meditate beforehand often on the Blessed Sacrament which thou art going to receive; think how kind thy Saviour is, to be thy heavenly Food and Sustenance. Think what Rudeness and Disgrace his Body suffer'd, and what Agonies he underwent; and how he was at last nail'd to the Cross, and there dy'd as a publick Malefactor, to save thee from Death, and this holy Sacrament was appointed as a continual Memorial of it. And speak cheerfully and sincerely, and with the greatest Gratitude, that thou art and wilt be always ready thus to shew forth his Death till he come; and then afterwards by a suitable Life and Practice, make it appear that thou does not give the Lye to the Resolutions and the Vows of future Obedience which thou hast made. O blessed Lord God ! may we all thus remember the Death and Sufferings of thy Son and our Saviour, Christ, 'till his second Coming, that at his second Coming we may rise again to that State of eternal Happiness, which he has purchas'd thro' his Blood.

5. After we have made the strongest Resolutions of Amendment and Reformation, we must daily and indefatigably implore God's Mercy still for the Forgiveness of our Sins, and diligently beg the Assistance of his holy Spirit, to enable us to go thro' with the great Work of Repentance; and to strengthen us, that we may perform those Resolutions that we have made with so much Seriousness and Sincerity: For, alas! of our selves we are able to do nothing as we ought to do; if we be left to our selves, we shall never be able thoroughly to repent: For Repentance is the Gift of God, and not in our Power; but our Saviour gives the greatest Grounds to hope, that if we do but diligently ask it of God, he will grant our Desire, if we ask it but in his Name: *Whatsoever ye shall ask of God in my Name, he shall give it you; and ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be open'd unto you.* Whatever Difficulties may appear in gaining our Victory over Sin, God will enable us to conquer all, if we do but earnestly address our selves to him for Help and Assistance: If our

Hearts

Hearts be hard, he can touch 'em with a Coal from his Altar, and melt them into a Christian Temper. If our Temptations be violent and strong, he can make Way for us to escape ; or if he have a Mind for us to undergo the severest Tryals, his Grace is sufficient for us. Let us but take Care to offer up our Petitions to him faithfully, and he will keep back nothing from us : If we have not hitherto so ask'd anything in our Saviour's Name, it is but asking faithfully, and we shall receive : He that offers but up his Prayers sincerely and faithfully to God, shall in no wise be rejected : Nothing is more effectual than constant and fervent Prayer ; 'tis the only means to disarm God's Hand of his Anger against us, humbly to prostrate ourselves before him : To supplicate against his Vengeance, and beseech him to be reconcil'd to us, and to be so importunate with him, till at last we perswade him (as it were) to forget our past Sins, and to give us Strength and Abilities to enable us to fulfil his Will, and to serve him truly hereafter all the Days of our Life. Let us therefore thro' the Merits of Christ come boldly

boldly to the Throne of Grace, having first diligently and thoroughly bewail'd our Sins and manifest Transgressions, and having without any Dissimulation made 'em fully known to him, and then we may be assur'd he will more and more strengthen us to perform our Resolution: So that 'tis our own Fault, if after we have proceeded some Way in Repentance, and come to the full Resolutions of a better Life, if we here suffer Shipwreck, and have an unfortunate Voyage; because we may be furnish'd from God with all Things necessary safely and securely to carry on our Design, if we can but bear at the Pains of asking them diligently and faithfully.

And here I cannot but take Notice of a very vain and vicious Practice: Some Men, thro' Afflictions and Calamities, thro' Sickneses, or the like, or when the good Mood of Consideration is upon 'em, are very earnestly bent upon Repentance, and do perhaps make some Steps and Advances therein; and while they continue in that Temper, may live much like Christians, bewail their Sins, confess 'em heartily to God, and lay

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open their whole Grievances, and unload their Consciences ; and yet after the Fit of Religion is a little over, forget all, and become the same easie and contented Offenders that they were before ; are willingly drawn aside by their Lusts, and Passions, and the Temptations of the Devil, and let all their Vows and Resolutions slip out of their Mind : Now this is a most silly and fantastical Resolution, and is so far from putting a Man in a better that he is really in a worse Condition, and farther from Repentance than he was before ; it shews him to be a very vain Man, but far from a true Penitent ; he has yet his Repentance to begin afresh, and an Addition of more Sins to repent of than he had before the breaking of his holy Resolutions and Vows, which are a kind of so many Oaths to oblige him to go on with his first Designs of Penitence, but it seems had no more Power to hold him from his Sins and Lusts, than Sampson's Bonds had to hold him, and like him, when they made their Resolutions and Vows to God, they told no more Truth, spoke no more sincerely than

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he did to his Wife, when at the same time he well knew how ineffectual those Bonds would prove.

Resolution is an imperfect Act, and is always made in relation to farther Acts, which if they do not follow, the Man's Resolution signifies nothing at all, unless to upbraid him, and to convince him more abundantly of his Folly and Vanity : Men must be neither condemn'd nor justify'd by bare Resolutions ; their Acts and Deeds must give the happy or fatal Stroke at the Day of Accounts.

We are fully resolv'd to live a good Life, answerable to what the Grace of God requires of us, that hath appeared to all Men, to live soberly, justly, and righteously in this present World : Why this is a good Resolution, but if nothing at all for the Performance of this Resolution does appear in our Life, to what End did we make it, but to our Shame and Disgrace ? Did not you resolve to lead a good Life, why what is become of all your Resolutions ? I see nothing in all your Conversation that seems to agree one Tittle with all your Resolutions, but you are the very same, with-

out any Variableness or Shadow of Changing, the same harden'd Mind, and the same presumptuous Offender: There is nothing to difference you from what you was, save only that you have found a new Way of sinning, i. e. of making Resolutions and Vows of a better Life, and never keeping of them, no more than you had made the same Promises, in some other Kind, to a Man, which it appears by Consequence you never intended to observe.

But however these may seem some faint Struggles of Repentance, to speak the most favourably of them, yet they add a great deal of Bulk to a Man's Guilt, and will make his Repentance after harder to come by.

Let therefore our Resolutions be follow'd with a suitable Practice ; let us live as we have resolv'd to live ; and if we find any Stops or Lets to hinder us from making good our Resolutions and Vows of Amendment, let us ask of God to give us Strength, who giveth freely and upbraideth not. God has adopted us, who were dead in Trespasses and Sins, to be his Sons, and he hath promis'd to be a Father to us; and

and if earthly Parents know how to give good Gifts unto their Children, how much more does our heavenly Father know what, in every Kind, we stand in need of; and as he has all the Bowels and Kindness of a Parent, a most tender Parent to his Children, so will he be as bountiful (not to say more) than any earthly Parent can be, in as much as his Blessings infinitely exceed those of the other; and his Care over us is equal, not to say that it exceeds theirs.

Let us therefore apply our selves to our heavenly Father, in all our Weaknesses and Infirmities, in all our Needs and Necessities, with a full Reliance and Dependance upon his Readiness to assist us in all our Wants and Difficulties, and to help us out in the Performance of our Resolutions, when our own Strength faileth us. He has promis'd that he will never leave us nor forsake us, and he, for his Part, will stand true to his Promise.

And then, lastly, if by the Measures I have propos'd to you we find our selves daily to gain Ground, and to conquer our Sins, then begins the

Hopes of a successful Repentance more to show it self, and we may find our selves daily in nearer Degrees to a Reconciliation with God.

A Man is not to think himself at the End of Repentance, till he has made his Resolutions of a good Life good in Fact ; as he has made several Steps and Advances in Piety and Virtue, so his Hopes of Pardon will encrease, and he will feel himself to draw nearer Heaven.

Repentance is a long and tedious Work, and it requires some considerable Time to come to Maturity in Religion, and Ripeness for Heaven ; the Gates of Life are not open'd to us on the sudden ; God expects to have a Trial of our Life and good Behaviour for some considerable Time ; he expects to have a full Acquaintance with our Piety and Virtue, before he will receive us ; else if we presumptuously, upon a few and weak Efforts in Repentance, offer to knock at those Gates, we shall be sent back with a *I know you not* ; I have not found you to be such Penitents as you pretend to be ; *Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter*

enter the Kingdom of Heaven ; but ~~be~~
that doth the Will of my Father which is
in Heaven.

But if we can plead, that through our Saviour's Assistance we have conquer'd our Lusts and Passions, that the World is reconcil'd to us and we unto the World ; if we can say with St. Paul, *I have fought a good fight, I have finish'd my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give.*

Perseverance in Piety and Holiness is the only Thing to give a Man any firm Hopes of his Repentance being accepted ; but while Men are toss'd to and fro betwixt their Religion and their Lusts ; one while serve God, and another while their Inclinations ; such a Condition can give a Man no Hopes ; he is still led Captive by the Devil at his Pleasure ; he is still in the Gall of Bitterness, and the Bond of Sin, and he must take other Methods in his Repentance before it will be accepted. He must continue and persevere in the Ways of Virtue, and daily press more forward towards Perfection ; strive still,

to attain to farther Degrees of Piety and Virtue ; forget the Things that are behind, and press towards those that are before, for the Price of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Be not weary in well-doing, for in due time you will receive your reward if you faint not. No man ever yet repented himself to have spent his Days in the Ways of Righteousness, but many a one has that he has not ; and perhaps to little Purpose. Let us run therefore with Patience the Race that is set before us ; let none of the glittering Bubbles of the World turn us out of our Way ; no Temptation draw us from our Duty ; no Allurements, no Suggestions of Satan break and weaken our Resolutions of faithfully serving God all the Days of our Life ; let that be our main End and Design, and the chief Interest we carry on in this World : Let this be done, whatever else be undone ; let us add one Virtue to another, till we come as near as possibly we can to our heavenly Father in Perfection, who is Perfection in the Abstract, who is Perfection it self : And if we take but this Course, we

shall

shall never be put to the Pains and Distrusts of that melancholy and doubtful Repentance which is too commonly made upon a Death-bed.

Of which Repentance I come at last to speak. I hope to draw it in so averting Colours, to represent it so dangerous and full of Hazard, to be attended with so little Hope, and so small Assurance at best, as to prevail with Men not to defer Things of so great Moment and Import, as their Salvation certainly is, to such a doubtful Issue.

And in doing this I shall confine my self chiefly, to insist upon the Unfitness and Inability of a dying Man, to make those Advances in Repentance which I have first shew'd to be necessary to make it acceptable with God.

After then I had told you the Nature of Repentance, that it was a hearty and sincere Sorrow for our Sins, because by them we had most grievously offended God, and made most wretched Returns for all his Kindnesses to us, I told you it was extreme necessary, in order to true Repentance, to make a particular Enquiry into our Life and Conversation, from the first Time we can

can remember our selves to have had true and right Notions of our Duty ; and now therefore let us consider in what Ability a Man is to remember and recollect all his Sins, all the Mistakes and Miscarriages of his Life upon a Death-bed : Just now the Man's a going to die ; he knows not whether Death will come this Night or in the Morning, or it may be defer his coming for a few Days ; but to be sure, will pay his ungrateful Visit shortly ; and now the Man has to repent when he is going to die ; a Thing he could not think it worth his while to do before : And to begin this Repentance, he has to recollect and call to Mind all his Sins ; and, alas ! what can he do in the Case ? Its well if he can remember a thousandth Part of them. He has liv'd Forty, Fifty, or Sixty Years in the World, and perhaps has not spent one Day well in all these Years ; but, could he remember, he has run deeply on score in Sin, and a black Catalogue of horrid Vices to shew to his Shame and Disgrace ; Let us now, that are in Health, try if we can call to Mind how we have employ'd all our Time ; what Good, or rather

rather what Evil we have done on every particular Day, and what Commands we have broken ? Our Accounts, I doubt, after a most diligent Search and Enquiry, will prove so imperfect, that we must offer them in with Blushes and Confusion of Face, that we have liv'd so unaccountably, and we must be forc'd, with the Psalmist, to express our selves after the strictest Examination ; *who knoweth how often he offendeth,* O cleanse thou me from my secret faults ? Not but that I do fully believe, our good and merciful God, will forgive Sins that are forgotten of us, upon a general Confession, (after we have used our utmost Endeavours to discover them, and could not, by a careful Examination) if we pour but out our Souls to him in a true and unfeigned Sorrow, and with a full Detestation and Abhorrence of all Sin ; and if we, who are now in Health, can but so imperfectly call to Mind our past Life, must make so many Omissions in taking in the Accounts of it ; a sick Person, who is just upon the Confines and Borders of his Grave ; just upon leaving this World, and upon his Journey for another,

other, being afflicted with so many bodily Pains, and startled with so dreadful Convulsions of Mind, upon the Prospect of so considerable a Change as he is going to make, will be able to do little or nothing in recollecting his past Life ; he may remember that he has been a great Sinner, a grievous Offender, against the repeated Instances of God's Blessings and Goodness ; that neither the Love of God, nor the Fear of him, neither his Promises, nor his Threats, could draw him to his Duty ; and may, in the Gross, own the Perverseness of his Ways ; but a Man in the Condition aforesaid, cannot dwell long upon these Thoughts ; the tedious Pains and Aches of a sickly State, will call off his Mind in Spite of all his Intention ; they will not be forgotten ; he must feel every Pang, every Sting of 'em ; and, you know, unless a Person stick close to any Business he's a Mind to dispatch, it will not go forward, nor can be brought to any Perfection ; nor therefore can any Person to any hopeful Effect call to Remembrance all his past Life (however necessary it is

to occasion a full Degree of Sorrow and Contrition for it) amongst so many Avocations, under the Sense of so much Pains of Body ; or, if the Pains of Body were more mild and tolerable, as sometimes it happens to sick Persons, yet still they are not fit to make an exact Enquiry into their Life past. A Multitude of Sins behind our Back, and a Hell before our Face, will raise sad Convulsions in our Souls ; and Conscience, perhaps, may tell us, 'tis now to little Purpose to offer to examine our past Lives, and to repent ; our Sins and Provocations are almost like the Stars of Heaven for Multitude, or the Sand upon the Sea-Shore ; it startles the Conscience to call 'em to Mind, they appear so horrid and black ; and, alas ! what Hopes is there ? What Good to be done ? The Man knows not what to do, being press'd with the Grief of a wounded Conscience, and discourag'd with the near Approaches of Death : His Heart faints within him, the dreadful Prospect of an Eternity, upon which he is about to enter, most sadly ruffles and disorders his Soul, fills him full of Amazement and Distrust

Distrust ; he cannot well, or to any Comfort, cast his Eyes back upon his past Life, Death is so near and terrible ; he cannot well think of anything else, for thinking of it, with all the dreadful Retinue of Mischiefs that may attend it, and he has all the Reason in the World to fear, will : The Pangs of Death have already encompass'd him, and the Pains of Hell got hold upon him.

Besides, the spiritual Concerns of the Man, and the Care of his Soul, he may have many temporal Businesses to dispatch ; he may have an Estate to dispose of, and this is a Thing that must be done, and generally commands our Care, let what will become of our Souls ; and indeed it is very fit this should be done discreetly and honestly ; but then, to leave the Management of this Affair to a dying Hour, and to refer such Business to such a Juncture, wherein we ought to have nothing more to do, then to trim up our Lamps for an Eternity, is a most dangerous Encroachment upon so valuable a Part of our Time, and every Thing will be done with that

Hurry

Hurry, (especially in relation to the Soul) that it will not be easy to decide, whether there will be much Difference betwixt the doing of it or the letting it alone ; so that you see a dying Person is very uncapable of performing the first Part of Repentance, to enquire into his Life and Conversation. But suppose he be able to enquire pretty narrowly into his Life and Conversation, which to be sure will take up some Time, and more than generally Men have to spare, when they come to die. [Suppose they have no Pains of Body to disturb 'em, no impertinent worldly Concerns to manage, but have nothing but their eternal State to take Care for.]

Yet, let us consider, in the 2d Place, how successfully this Repentance is likely to proceed. That the Man has examin'd his Life as narrowly as he can, then he must make an honest and sincere Confession of his Sins to God, without any Concealment of their foul and aggravating Circumstances, which is a very difficult Task, and what we cannot well attend to in a sickly State ; nor can he readily remember

member, how perverse and stubborn he has been ; how ungrateful and disingenuous throughout the whole Course of his Life ; how often he has sinn'd against the Checks of Conscience, the plain Revelation of God's Will, and the Motions of God's Holy Spirit, enclining him to Goodness and Virtue, yet all to no Effect. A many Circumstances there are, which mightily heighten and inflame Sins, and will cloath a small Sin, in Comparison, in a very ugly and deform'd Dress ; and of such like Circumstances a Man can but at best remember little, and therefore his Confession is like to be very imperfect ; he must confess his Sins by Halves ; and tho' God may make Allowances, after great Endeavours to discover our Sins have been used, yet there can be no great Hopes of receiving Favour at his Hands in that Kind, when all this happens thro' our own Neglect, when Men have for their whole Lives strove to keep themselves as much in Ignorance of their Sins as they could, forgot 'em on Purpose, that they might sin with less Remorse of Conscience,

and

and not have their Pleasures interrupted by such melancholy Reflections. And besides, there are the same Objections to be made against the Opportunity of confessing our Sins, that I have told you was against our Conveniency of making a perfect Enquiry into 'em upon a Death-Bed ; the Pains and Aches of the Body, so that a Man cannot attend to religious Matters ; the lower Qualms of an ill Conscience, which so discompose the Man, that he knows not what to do ; and his State appears so intolerably dangerous, that he cannot abide to think of it ; so that the Confession of such a Person's Sins, to God, is likely to be extremely imperfect ; all Things must be huddled up into a Heap, into a *God be merciful to me a Sinner.*

But let us see, in the 3d Place, in what a Condition the Death-Bed Penitent is, to express a proportionable Degree of Sorrow for the Greatness of his Sins ; and if he be so uncapable of performing the two foremention'd Degrees of Repentance, he cannot be qualified for this Performance : If a Man be not fully sensible of the Foulness and Great-

ness of his Crimes, how can he sufficiently lament 'em? How can there be wrought in him that degree of godly Sorrow, which worketh Repentance unto Salvation, not to be repented of? A Man should draw the heaviest Indictment against himself, to make himself sufficiently sorrowful; and if his bodily Pains will not allow him to take a Survey of his Life past, but in a very imperfect Manner at best, his Sorrow will likely be of the same kind, very imperfect, and not be rightly proportion'd to the degree of his Sins, and their aggravating Circumstances; he will but spend a few Tears, when many are requir'd; drop a Tear, when his Eyes should gush out with Water; be a little sorrowful, when he should weep bitterly: Besides, if the Man's Heart be so far dissolv'd into Sorrow, that he may seem excessively to be concerned for his Sins, if he can weep bitterly for 'em, be grievously troubled that he has been so unwise as to be guilty of 'em, yet he begins but first to express this Grief for his Sins when he is about to dye; he could commit 'em before, without any Trouble or Remorse of Con-

Conscience; could commit his Sins with Pleasure, and take Delight in those that did the same Things; how happen'd that he did not think it so evil a Thing and bitter, to have transgress'd against God in the Time of Health and Prosperity? How comes the Man now to be so unlike himself? He was before, and for his whole Life, a chearful and unrepenting Offender; nothing could stop him in his Course; he could commit Sin with Greediness, drink down Iniquity as the Ox drinketh down Water, with a mighty Thirst. Why now he repents, and he is heartily sorry for his Sins! What is the Meaning of all this, to run upon the Score of Sin a whole Life, to encrease the Score of Sorrow at Death? Why the Thing is here, Men will never repent, 'till Death present 'em with all the hideous Dangers of Impenitence; so that 'tis neither any Love they truly bear to God, or any real Hatred and Abhorrence they have of theit Sins, that makes 'em repent. 'Tis nothing but their present Danger; they could hug their Sins in their Bosoms to their Grave, but only they are afraid of be-

ing damn'd for 'em. *Hinc Lacryma illa,*
hinc Luctus. This is all the Cause of
 Sorrow; the Man could have descend-
 ed into his Grave with dry Eyes, but
 that he fears he has liv'd so ill, as to be
 extreamly upon the Hazard as to his
 State in the next Life; he could leap
 into the next World with the same
 Courage that the stout *Roman* did into
 that large Chasm in the publick *Forum*,
 with all his Sins about him, did he
 dread the Issue: And now do you not
 think that God is ready to open his
 Arms wide to receive such a Penitent?
 That the Gates of Heaven shall be made
 open for him before the Time he be
 dead, and the holy Angels ready to
 conduct him thither: No, no, God is
 not to be impos'd upon, he is not so
 easy to be reconcil'd; he knows the
 Reason of all the Man's Sorrow and
 Grief, he is afraid of being lost and
 undone for ever; he is not so much
 troubled that he has offended God,
 and against so good a God, but he's
 afraid of being lost and undone for
 ever; and this, indeed, is a good Rea-
 son for a Man to be troubled, and it

is much to be fear'd is the only Motive of such a Penitent's Sorrow.

And this brings me in the 4th Place to consider, in what a Condition such a Man is yet to pursue his Repentance, by making Resolutions of Amendment and Reformation. We will suppose that he has enquir'd into his past Life, confess'd his Sins to God, express'd a great deal of Sorrow for 'em, and is now fully resolv'd against Sin ; and what is the Reason now he only begins to resolve against Sin ? What any one may conjecture by his former Life, he was resolv'd to engage in Sin as long as he could ; now he's resolv'd against Sin, just as a sick Man is resolv'd against Meat, because he has no Stomach to it.

He is thro' old Age, Sickness, or the like, quite disabled from pursuing his Lusts any longer ; he has serv'd the Devil, the World, and the Flesh as long as he can, and now he repents, and is resolv'd to serve God, when he is unfit to serve any thing else, when he can serve the Devil, the World and the Flesh no longer, now for Religion, now for Piety and Virtue, when the Coffin

and the Winding Sheet are preparing for his Burial : Now he is fully resolv'd against Sin, and his Resolution in some Sort is likely to be made good, for he has not much more Time to sin in, and Death itself will put Bounds to his Wickedness, tho' he could not see any Time to put Bounds to it before.

Now this is such an unmannerly, nay provoking Proceeding with God, as cannot easily be declared, *Quando nemini obtrudi potest ad me itur*; when a Man can thrust himself into no Service else, then he applies himself to God; and now he is importunate to be taken into his Favour, and makes large Promises, that he will never forsake his Service, tho' there cannot be the least Reason given in Favour of his future Fidelity; and if God takes such a Person into his Service, who has quite disabled himself for serving his direct Enemies, which yet he obstinately did as long as he could— O the Riches, the Riches of the Goodness and Mercy of God ! Let us consider with what a Face such a Person can apply himself to God. O God, my Sins

Sins are innumerable and great ; I have sinn'd and continued to sin as long as I was able, against all thy Goodness and loving Kindness, against all thy Calls and Invitations, against all thy Threats and the Terrors of thy Judgments ; but now I perfectly see my Folly, bewail and sadly lament it : I have been a most ungrateful Wretch ; I was resolv'd, as long as I was able, to follow my own Inclinations ; to be guided by my Passions and Lusts, and never to think of thee, and my latter End ; but now when Death presents itself, I have a different View of Things ; my Sins are Gall and Wormwood to me ; they afford no Relish, because I am not able to pursue 'em any longer. Therefore, O God, now I turn to thee ; I have a great Mind and Desire to be sav'd ; I have been extravagantly foolish I must confess, but now I come to a more serious Consideration of Things, and if my Life was to be lengthen'd out to its double Length, all of it should be employ'd in thy Service ; I wou'd live a good and pious Life ; herein would I exercise my self, to have a Conscience void of Offence towards

God and towards Man : Do not, O Lord, disappoint me of this Design I have laid, to live as I list, while I liv'd, and to go to Heaven when I die. What Answer do we think will God make to such a Petition ? With what Patience will he hear the Prayers of such a Penitent ? And yet this I fear is the true Interpretation of such late Repentance : Men would never repent but for fear of Hell, or ever beg Mercy but in Hopes of Heaven.

And God, who knows the Heart of such a Penitent, will not, we may be sure, accept of such a forc'd Repentance ; a Repentance, which was only extorted from a Man thro' the Terrors of Death, and the Apprehensions of future Judgment. If a Man could be sure to have the same Reprieve granted that King *Hezekiah* had ; if he could be sure of having 15 Years added more to his Life, there would be a fair Opportunity for the Trial of the Sincerity of his Repentance ; but to pretend to great Sanctity and Holiness when we expect to die every Moment, and to resolve to lay out the rest of our Time in the Service of God, when we see

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our Time drawing to a Period and Conclusion, this is nothing but flattering God, and speaking him fair, in hopes to gain his Favour ; 'tis just as if a Man should run into a vast Debt, and all his Life take no Care to pay it, yet when he comes to die lament his Injustice, and tell his Creditor, if it pleas'd God to prolong his Days, he should never lose a Farthing by him ; if it please but God to continue my Days, have a little Patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And thus we would do Justice to Men, and perform our Duty to God, on the Condition of such Terms as will never be granted us : We would desire Forbearance, when the Day of Forbearance and long Suffering is over. — But to such Persons, what our Saviour said over the miserable City *Jerusalem*, are very applicable : *If thou hadst known in this thy Day the Things which belong to thy Peace, but now they are hid from thine Eyes :* Thou hast abused that Goodness and long Suffering of God, all thy Life, which should have led thee to Repentance, and now like a broken Merchant would compound for a Trifle in Comparison,

rison, for all the vast Debts thou hast contracted in thy whole Life, and wou'dst wipe out all thy Sins with a few Tears; with a *God be merciful to me a Sinner*; with a *let me die the Death of the righteous*, and *let my last End be like his*. This is downright Fraud and Injustice, whatever thou mayst think of it, and will be esteem'd no better with God; thou hast design'd to rob and deprive him of the Worship and Reverence thou owest all thy Life, and hopest to come off with a bare Acknowledgment of the Debt after all, and with a few Vows and Promises of more sincere Obedience afterward; hopest to reconcile thy self, when thou art in a great Measure convinc'd that there shall never be an Opportunity of trying the Sincerity of 'em. God knows sufficiently how such a Penitent would have behav'd himself had he liv'd, and accordingly will deal with him; and there are so many Instances of Persons that have made such Advances in Repentance, upon Afflictions, or Sickneses, and all to as little Effect as if they'd never made em, that a Man must be very suspicious of himself, as to his future Behaviour, if

it should please God to prolong his Days : When that Man recovers, the old Temptations generally draw forth the same Sins ; he will return with the Dog to his Vomits, and with the Sow to his wallowing in the Mire. And then, if the Man had happen'd to have died in this good Mood, God, who knew how he would have liv'd, if he had liv'd longer, will judge him, not according to what he says, but according to what he would have done had he liv'd longer. I wonder what Hopes of God's accepting such a Man's Repentance he can propose to himself ? Tho' God be truely represented in the Holy Gospel to be merciful, yet how can such a harden'd Sinner have the Face to expect his Mercy ; will God shew Wonders among the Dead, or amongst Persons that are as good as so ?

I am very certain it will be a Sort of a Miracle, if the weak Efforts of the Repentance of old Age, or a Death-Bed, can move God's Pity and Compassion : I deny not the Possibility of the Thing ; but a Man cannot make a greater Venture, unless his last Act be wilful

wilful Murder of himself, and indeed a wilful Disobedience from a Man's whole Life to the known Methods for his Salvation, are no inconsiderable Steps to a voluntary making away our Souls, and running 'em upon eternal Perdition; and what can we say for our selves, if God then laugh at our Ruin and Destruction? We cannot complain, that he has not afforded us Means for our Salvation, and that he has not done his utmost to save us: What could the Lord have done more to his Vineyard, than what he has done to it; wherefore, when he might very justly have expected it to have brought forth Grapes, is it not strange that it should bring forth wild Grapes; that all his Care and Pains for our Salvation should be to no Purpose, unless to upbraid our Folly, and cover us with Shame. There is nothing in the World more firmly believ'd by me, than that God is infinitely tender of the Welfare and Happiness of his Creatures; but when he has done his utmost to save, and we neglect the Means, thy Judgments, O God, are just and righteous altogether; if thou deliver us to inher-

rit our own Choice, and condemn us to eternal Punishment, we can make no Apology for our selves; we have deservedly drawn the Punishment upon our own Heads.

And lastly, therefore let us consider in what Condition a dying Man, or one that is not far from Death, is, to come to any Degrees of Assurance, that his Repentance shall be accepted of God. Now a Man cannot presently, after a wicked and profane Life, tho' he have enquir'd diligently into it, lament the Grievousness of his Sins, make a hearty and sincere Confession of 'em to God, and full Resolutions of living more agreeable both to Spirit and Reason; yet, I say, granting the Penitent to have advanced thus far, if the Shortness of his Time will allow it, which yet is little to be relied on, how is the Man assur'd that God has pardon'd and forgiven his Sins? If the Lord would speak to him with an audible Voice from Heaven; if in as plain Words as our Saviour did upon the Cross, when the Thief that was crucify'd by him, pray'd unto him to remember him when he came to his Kingdom,

dom, *This Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*: If the silent Whispers of God's holy Spirit, would breathe any Comfort into his Soul; nay, if he could but quiet and compose the Outcries of Conscience, by laying hold on the comfortable Promises of God's holy Word, there would then be some Hopes of Heaven: But Men must not expect Miracles to be wrought for 'em; the ordinary Means of Salvation are propos'd and declar'd to the World, and the Sound of the Gospel is gone out thro' all Nations, and if Men will stop their Ears, or, what is worse, hear and promise Obedience to it, and never think of making their Promise good, 'till they can have no Time to judge, whether the utmost they can then perform in that Kind will procure God's Favour: What can they expect? For our coming to a Peace and Reconciliation with God, is not to be judged from our present Sorrow of our Sins, however great it be; but from our subduing and conquering of 'em afterwards, and at last gaining an entire Victory over them; so that there is a great deal to do in Repentance, before
it

it will come to any considerable Perfection: Our Victory over our Lusts and Passions is no easy Matter, but requires a great deal of Pains and Industry; 'tis a difficult Matter to hinder Sin from reigning in our mortal Bodies, when it has had so long a Reign, and govern'd all our Actions for our whole Lives without Controul. Sin will (by so long a Space of Time) have gotten a settled and establish'd Dominion in our Hearts, and be scarce, if ever, rooted out.

We shall but be able to get Ground of it by little and little; just as Virtue and Piety gets greater and greater Strength in us, so will the Strength of Sin decrease and lessen: And this Thing cannot be expected to be done with any great Expedition; the Habits of Sin, contracted by a whole Life's Practice, will be hard to remove; they are, as it were, fasten'd and rivetted in our Nature; have fully gain'd our Hearts, our Love, and Liking; have estrang'd our Minds to Virtue and Goodness, and the Offices of Religion; so that as the Man's Heart will be little dispos'd to forsake his Sins, or if it be enclin'd

enclin'd that Way, yet he will find a great Difficulty in doing it, he will be every now and then relapsing into his former State, and he will find much ado to shake off the Yoke ; his old Lusts and Passions will recoil upon him ; his Custom of Sinning will be so interwoven with Nature, that he must put off both together, if he be minded to part with one ; it will be as hard for him to be good, as to make that Man strait who is bow'd down with old Age to the Ground ; then the Power of the Devil will be at its full Height in a manner over him, and his Strength to resist him, like the Strength of old Age to perform manly Actions, very unfit for the Combat ; and tho' that subtil Serpent has tempted him on to enjoy the World, and to fulfil the Lusts of his own Heart, to satisfy his Curiosity in every Thing that is base and sinful, for all his past Life, telling him, *Deum esse placabilem*, that God is easy to be appeas'd ; that he will be pacify'd for a multitude of Sins, and grant Pardon upon easy Terms, nay, his own Hand may make him so presumptuous ; yet, now when
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the Man draws near Death, he will be awak'd out of the Dream and Delusion, and he will be presented with another Prospect of Things ; Sin will then appear exceeding sinful, and Virtue to be really and, truly lovely and amiable, and yet the Man not in Ability to make Choice of it, or if he strive to do it, can but have small Hopes of Success ; has nothing but the Grace of God to rely on ; he is perfectly stript, and turn'd naked of all other Strength ; and what Reason he has to expect that, which he hath despis'd all his Life, does not easily appear ; nor can he, upon any good Grounds, desire it, or look for it ; God has made a plain Declaration of his Will to the World ; his Grace hath appear'd unto all Men, but not upon those large and loose Terms, as if Men might live at their Pleasure, and walk in the Ways of their own Heart as long as they had a Mind, and could command God's Grace to repent, and to amend, when they pleas'd ; his Grace hath appear'd to teach us to deny Ungodliness and Worldy Lusts ; he hath chosen us to be a peculiar People to him, zealous of good Works,

and to live so, and be such in our Life-time, and not to make only our first Attempts of a godly Life, some few Weeks, or Days, or Hours before our Death. This is a tempting God to soine Purpose ! 'Tis a most intolerable Piece of Presumption ! 'Tis a scandalous Neglect, and Contempt of his Grace ! 'Tis as if we believ'd but one Half of the Scriptures, his merciful and gracious Promises to Sinners, but thought all the rest (wherein his Threats, Indignation, Wrath, and heaviest Displeasure against all such as are resolv'd to continue to be so, 'till Death, or at least 'till old Age, notwithstanding all his Calls to Repentance and Offers of Pardon) to be a meer Fable.

But if the Word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every Transgression of Disobedience receiv'd a just Recompence of Reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation, which comes offer'd to us by the Son of God, and so strongly confirm'd and attested to by God himself. *Heb. 2. 2, &c.*

But it may be said, Men that design to put off Repentance to their latter End,

End, do really value and believe the Holy Scriptures as the very Word of God ; they are fully convinc'd of God's Goodness in redeeming 'em ; they do not despise God's Grace, but admire, and are thankful for it, and hope in God in some time to dispose themselves, by Repentance, for the Mercy of God, and to partake of it. But can there be any greater Sign of contemning or despising a Thing, than when a Gift is freely and frankly offer'd, and on easy Terms, then not to receive it ? Does it not look very like despising the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, if Men will not deny Ungodliness and worldly Lust to receive it, to be capable of it ? Is it not like Contempt, that Men lend a deaf Ear to all God's Commands ; nor does it appear any Way, by their Life, that they value any of his Threats ? And if it do not, how can the Man reasonably look for God's Grace to make him a true Penitent ? I pray God none of us may ever run that dangerous Venture, to put Things thus to the last ; for, as I take it, a Man cannot easily run a greater Hazard.

Nor, therefore, can I see any good Reasons for such to believe their Pardon seal'd in Heaven, before they go hence and be no more seen.

I do not deny the Power of God; he can fetch Water out of a flinty Rock, soften the hardest Heart, melt a Man down into the deepest Sorrow and Contrition for his Sins, and bring him into a truer Christian Temper, in a short Time, than it's possible a Person that has not such extraordinary Portions of his Grace can attain to in many Years. But this is not according to the Methods of his Providence; and no Man has the least Grounds to think he shall be so dealt with. If one Person was sav'd under the Tortures of Death upon the Cross, cou'd we call him a wise Man that shou'd expect the same? If the *Israelites* were fed with Manna from Heaven, if the Fowls of the Air are cloath'd of God, what cou'd we think him to be other than a Fool, who neglected the ordinary Means of providing himself Meat and Cloathing in Hopes of the like Miracle of Providence? The Man's Folly might be pity'd, but never excus'd; and

and it does not appear to me, but those are much greater Fools who neglect the Means of Salvation all their Life-time, in Hopes of being sav'd by no less a Miracle. For we must consider our Case and the Thief's upon the Cross is quite different ; he embrac'd Christianity as soon as he heard of it ; but we have liv'd under the constant Profession of it, may be, almost for our whole Lives, and are little better for it ; and cannot look back upon any Part of our Life, but may have reason to blush at our Incorrigenbleness and Obstinacy, ingrateful Returns for God's Mercy, and open Profaneness against his Laws.

And yet still I might urge farther the Dangerousness of a late, and especially of a Death-bed Repentance ; as the Hurry of Visits, which are every now and then disturbing and breaking off such Men's Devotions with asking of their Health, and what Hopes the Physician has of 'em, where most of their Grievance is, with the Throng of Friends and Attendance, who indeed are necessary on such Occasions ; and sometimes they have considerable

Disturbances from the unreasonably passionate Grief of their Relations ; so that when their whole Thoughts should be in Heaven, they are drawn down to the Earth : I do not speak thus much to accuse such Practices, but I would have a Man in that State and Condition when he comes to die, as that tho' Humanity and natural Affection may keep his Eye now and then fix'd upon this World, yet, that his Soul can presently mount up to Heaven in pious Hymns and Ejaculations, and for that End he must be a considerable Proficient in Devotion, have gone threw the several Degrees of Repentance, apply'd the good Promises of God to himself, have done his Utmost to please him by a cheerful and hearty Service, and to have made such Advances in Religion, as make the Hopes of God's Favour spring up in his Mind, and, in short, when he comes to die, he must have little more to do than to deliver up his Soul into the Hands of a merciful Redeemer, into the Keeping of a gracious God ; and this can scarce ever happen in the Case of a Person that has left his

his Repentance to be done upon his Death-bed.

From what has been said at large upon this Subject, I shall briefly draw these following Inferences, and so conclude the whole Discourse.

If to die the Death of the Righteous, and make one's last End like his, be so desirable a Thing, as I have represented it, then, in the first Place, let us make it our utmost Endeavour to die in his Condition: And,

If in the 2d Place, the Repentance of a dying Man, or one not far from his Death, be so full of Hazard and Danger, let us strive to avoid it.

And, 1st, if the Condition of a dying righteous Man be so desirable, let us endeavour to die in his Condition. Let us endeavour to answer the Ends of our Creation, by faithfully serving and obeying God, by honourng his holly Name, and his Word, by being thankful for his Providences over us, in continuing our Being; for in him we live and move, and have our Being; and, by daily returning him Thanks for all the Benefits we daily receive of

him : And this will be a Means to make him shower down more and more Blessings upon us in every Kind.

2dly. To qualify ourselves for the happy *Exit* of the Righteous, let us mind those Things most that most concern us ; let our Salvation be our Care, and the Concern of our Souls the Thing we chiefly watch after ; let no Ambition, no worldly Interest, no Suggestions of the Devil make us make Shipwreck of our Souls ; they are the best, and infinitely the best Part of ourselves, and thereof they ought to have, and in Justice command, a proportionable Degree of Care ; what is not of much Value, requires not much Care, nor much Esteem, and of this Kind is the Body ; but our Souls are infinitely valuable, because they are to live for ever, and be happy or miserable to all Eternity, according to our Care of 'em ; and therefore we ought to express our utmost Care for 'em.

If they be to last for ever, we ought to take Care of 'em, as of Things that will last for ever ; and if by our Care or Neglect we may make 'em happy or miserable for ever, we do not understand

stand the Value of any Thing rightly, or however, not consider it, if we do not take Care according to the Worth of Things. Let therefore the Care of our Souls be the main Interest we drive on in this World : Let this be done whatever is neglected.

3dly. Let us take Care to make our Peace with God ; use our utmost Diligence to be reconcil'd to him, to be in his Favour before we go hence, and be no more seen. This is the Happiness of a righteous Man, that let what will be his Enemy, he has made God his Friend ; and therefore fears not what Man, or all the World can do to him, or what they may say of him ; he is, and will die in the Favour of him that possesses all in all.

And therefore no good Things shall be with-holden from him : His Master, whom he serves, is able to make him as happy as he can desire, and will make him so : He shall enter into the Joy of his Lord. Since therefore the Degrees of the righteous Man's Happiness will be so great, let us diligently imitate his Life, that we may inherit the Blessings of his Death.

And

And, 2dly, because a Death-bed Repentance is almost unspeakably dangerous, let us endeavour to avoid it.

Repentance, true and sincere, is really necessary to Salvation; but how shall we perform such a One upon a dying Hour? We can have but small Command of ourselves to repent at such a Time. We can remember but little of our Sins; they will be to us like a Tale that hath been told, that is presently gone out of our Mind, and after, is no more thought of, nor to be recover'd; our Memory is but an imperfect Recorder at best, if we examine it but upon late Matters; but if we be to look back upon our whole Life past, what then can we remember of it? And what proportionable Sorrow can we then make for the Grievousness of our Sins, when we can recollect little or nothing of 'em? Or, if we cou'd remember 'em, and consequently make a Confession of 'em, had we Time enough, yet how shall we do it, when Time is about to be no more to us, and our Eyes ready to be clos'd up for an Eternity, with all the

Hor-

Horrors of our Sins, and Death upon our Hands ?

Or, if we had Time to make a full and sorrowful Confession of them, and then proceed to make Resolutions of a better Life. Yet, how can we live a better Life, when we must now live no more ? Or, what Assurance of being sav'd can we have upon such a Confession or Resolution, which was only extorted from us upon the nearerer Advances of Death, and never was before practis'd in our Life-time ? Who will hear our Confession ? Who will hear our Prayer ? Or what will our Humbling profit us ?

If we could live under the Gospel Dispensation our whole Lives, under all the Means of Grace, how can we now desire that which we have so long neglected ? Or if we desire it, how can we expect it to be given ? *To Day therefore, if you will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts ; put not off the Care of your Souls to another Time.* If we have neglected the Means of Salvation all our Lives, the same lamentable Words that were said by our Saviour over *Jerusalem*, may well be

be said over us, *If thou hadst known in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace,* (well had it been for thee if thou hast) but now they are hid from thy eyes. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* For what Peace can there be, when thy Whoredoms and Adulteries, thy Sins and Transgressions are reach'd unto Heaven, and thy Injustice and Profaneness unto the Ears of the Lord of Sabbath? What Hopes can there be of the assisting Grace of God, which thou hast despised all thy Life? Let us therefore not in this great Concern be deceived; God is not mock'd; for even as a Man soweth, so shall he reap; *if we have sown to the Flesh, we shall of the Flesh reap Corruption; if we sow to the Spirit, we shall reap Immortality and Life eternal.* A great deal of Disgrace and Confusion will attend the Consideration of our wicked Ways upon a Death-bed; and it may be repli-ed to us then, *What Fruit had ye in those Things whereof ye are now ashamed?* *For the End of those Things is Death.* But if we be now freed from Sin, and take care to make our selves Servants unto God, we shall have our Fruit un-

to Holiness, and the End everlasting Life. For the certain Wages of Sin, not duly repented of, is Death ; but the Gift of God is eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that you yield your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is the reasonable Service ; and fashion not your selves unto this World, but be ye changed, by the renewing of your Minds, that ye may prove what the good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God is ? *The Night is far spent, the Day is at Hand, let us therefore cast away the Works of Darkness, and let us put on the Armour of Light.*

Let us walk honestly as in the Day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying ; but put on ye the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Let us live every Day as if it were to be our last, for it may be so for any Thing we know to the contrary. Nay, if we have put off our Care of Salvation

tion to this present Day, we have been guilty of a most sad Folly ; but if we have done so, there is now no Remedy, but our Diligence to repent earnestly of our Sins, to do Justice and to love Mercy, and walk humbly with our God ; to double our Care about the eternal Interest and Concern of our Souls, while Time is in our Hands, and not to neglect making our Peace with God, till Time shall be run out, and be no more to us.

O good God, dispose our Hearts strongly to Repent in this our Day ; there is no Work impossible with thee : If our Sins be as Scarlet, thou canst make them as Wooll ; if they be as Crimson, thou canst make them as White as Snow, through the Blood of thy dear Son and our Redeemer. O God, while we are in Health and Strength, let thy Grace work in us Repentance unto Salvation, as the Earnest of thy Spirit, to seal us to everlasting Life ; and grant that we may never venture our Hopes of Heaven to a dying Hour, to a God be merciful to me a Sinner, and let me die the Death of the Righteous, &c. Grant this, O Lord.

A SER-



A

S E R M O N.

Luke xxiv. Part of the 5th and 6th
Verses.

*Why seek ye the living among the dead?
he is not here but risen.*



WHILE our Saviour Christ
was yet alive and convers'd
amongst them, he told his
Apostles very frequently,
That he must be put to Death,
but after that he would, within three Days,
rise again: As you may read Matth.
16, 21.

16. 21. From this Time forth Jesus began to shew unto his Disciples, how that he must go unto *Jerusalem*, and suffer many Things of the Elders, and chief Priests, and Scribes, and be killed, and be rais'd again the third Day.

Again, *Matth. 17. 22.* And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, *the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the Hands of Men, and they shall kill him, and the third Day he shall be rais'd again.* And likewise *John 16. 16.* Nay, he told this not only to the Apostles, but to all the People; nay, more than that, he gave this as a Token, and as an Evidence to them, whereby they should know and be convinc'd, that he was what he gave himself out to be, the Son of God, that great Prophet and Saviour that should come into the World. For when the Jews question'd him about his Commission and Authority, *John 2. 18.* you may find his Answer in the following Verse, *Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up;* speaking of the Temple of his Body, which might very well be call'd a Temple, because the Fulness of the Godhead dwelt in it bodily.

But

But notwithstanding these plain and express Predictions after his Death and Burial, we find his Disciples not a little amaz'd and perplex'd, when they came on the first Day of the Week, and the third from his Burial, to the Sepulchre, and finding the Stone rolled away from the Door of the Sepulchre, they entred in, but found not the Body of Jesus. And in this Surprize of theirs, behold, two Men stood by them in shining Garments, reproving them in the Words of my Text, *Why seek ye the living among the dead? he is not here, but is risen;* and withal reminding them that our Saviour had foretold this, while he was yet in Galilee, saying, *The son of man must be deliver'd into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.*

Which Things, when they were related among the Apostles, we find had no great Credit given them, v. 11.

Indeed, they believ'd and own'd our Saviour to be a Prophet, mighty in Deed and Word, before God and all the People; and they trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed *Israel*, v. 21.

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But

But for Sorrow and Passion about the Things which had befallen our Saviour, for Surprize and Astonishment, they forgot to look back upon the foregoing Predictions, and could not clear themselves of Doubts and Scruples, until our Saviour reprov'd them for their Dulness, and convinc'd them; *O Fools and slow of Heart, to believe all that the Prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffer'd these Things, and to enter into his Glory?*

And beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the Things concerning himself. It is of the highest Concern and Import for us to be fully convinc'd of our Saviour's Resurrection from the Dead; *For if Christ be not risen, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. 15. 17. your Faith is in vain, ye are yet in your Sins.*

If Christ be not risen from the Dead, he could be no Saviour to us? If he could not, by his own Power, raise up himself from the Dead, how shall he be able to raise us? We should trust to a broken Reed, and depend upon Safety from him who could not save himself.

But

But now since we are fully assured that he is risen from the Dead, and exalted at the Right Hand of God, with Power to confer Salvation on whom he pleases, hence proceeds all the Confidence and the Strength of our Hope; And we may rely upon him to make us happy, who could arrive at Happiness and Glory himself, through all the Difficulties of a suffering Life and painful Death.

And thus God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, unto an Inheritance uncorruptible and undefiled. 1 Pet. 1. 3.

By the Resurrection of Christ, his Father is said to have begotten him; and therefore by the same he hath begotten us, who are call'd Brethren and Co-heirs with Christ.

For, if when we were Enemies we were reconcil'd to God by the Death of his Son, much more being reconcil'd we shall be sav'd by his Life.
Rom. 10. 10.

For now being risen from the Dead, he ever liveth to make Intercession to God the Father for us, to present his Sufferings and Passion as a sufficient Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole World ;

And being both Lord and Christ, he not only constantly proposes to his Father the Sufficiency of his Sufferings, but endues us with Power to conquer the Enemies of our Souls ; and has sent the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, into our Hearts, not only to lead us into all Truth, to direct us in the Practice of a religious Life, but to enable us to make the best of our Way to Heaven, through all the Difficulties, Tribulations, and Allurements of this World.

Since then the Resurrection of our Saviour is so absolutely necessary to make us secure, that he has wrought our Salvation for us, and is able to bestow it upon us ; since this Doctrine must be so comfortable to every Christian, I shall shew,

I. That

I. That the promis'd *Messias* was to rise from the Dead. And,

II. Shall shew that *Jesus of Nazareth*, whom we believe to be, and worship as the *Messias*, did actually rise again from the Dead.

I. That the promis'd *Messias* was to rise from the Dead.

He was not only to instruct us in the Way to Heaven, by his Life and Doctrine ; not only to offer up his Body a Sacrifice for our Sins, and to undergo Death due to us as a Punishment for them, but he was to rise again, to make him a perfect Saviour.

As the *Messias* was to be born of the Seed of *David*, so was he particularly typified by him, and promis'd unto him. Numerous were the Troubles which *David* suffer'd, both from his own People and the neighbouring Nations.

Thus he says of himself, and thus he expresses himself of the promis'd *Messias*, in his 2 Ps. 2. *The Kings of the Earth set themselves, and the Rulers take*

Council together against the Lord, and against his Anointed, that is the Christ.

And from thence it was, that the Apostle expresses himself, *Act. 4. 27, 28. That against the holy Child Jesus, whom God had Anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the People of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever the Hand and Council of God determined before to be done ; which was to crucify and slay the Lord of Life.*

But notwithstanding all this Trouble and Persecution, it was spoken of David, and foretold of Christ, the Son of David, *Yet have I set mine Anointed up on my holy Hill of Sion. I will declare the Decree ; the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee.* *Psal. 2. 6, 7.*

As therefore the Troubles of David amounted only to a Depression of him, and therefore his Exaltation was a settling in the Kingdom ; so the Conspiracy of the Jews against the Messiah, amounted to a real Crucifixion and Death ; and therefore the Exaltation must include a Resurrection.

And he that riseth from the Dead, beginning as it were to live another Life,

and the Grave to him is in the manner of a Womb to bring him forth : Therefore when God said of his Anointed, *Thou art my son, this Day have I begotten thee,* he did foretel and promise that he would raise the Messias from Death to Life.

But because this Prediction is somewhat dark, by reason of the figurative Expression of it, therefore God, by the Mouth of the same Prophet *David*, hath farther clear'd this Truth ; *My Flesh shall rest in Hope, for thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption;* which Passage is very well and truly apply'd to our Saviour by the Apostle, *Acts 2. 31.*

As for the Patriarch *David*, he is both dead and bury'd, and his Flesh consumed in his Sepulchre ; but being a Prophet, and knowing that God hath sworn with an Oath to him, that of the Fruit of his Loins, according to the Flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his Throne ; he seeing this before, spoke of the Resurrection of Christ, that his Soul was not left in Hell, neither his Flesh did see Corruption.

His Body and Soul were to be separated by Death, and each to be dispos'd in that Place which was respectively appointed for them ; but neither long to continue there, the Body not to be detain'd in the Grave, the Soul not to be left in Hell, but both to meet, and being united to rise again.

Joseph, who was ordain'd to save his Brethren from Death, who would have slain him, did represent the Son of God, who was slain by us, and yet dying sav'd us ; and his being in the Dungeon signify'd Christ's Death ; his being taken out from thence signify'd his Resurrection ; his Advancement to the Power of *Egypt*, next to *Pharoah*, signify'd Christ's sitting at the Right Hand of God.

Isaac was sacrific'd, and yet liv'd, to signify that Christ should truly dye, and truly live again.

And *Abraham* offer'd him up, accounting that God was able even to raise him from the Dead, from whence also he raised him in a Figure, *Heb. ii. 19.* In *Abraham*'s Intention *Isaac* dy'd ; in his Expectation he was to rise from the Dead ; in his Acceptation, being spar'd,

spar'd, he was rais'd from the Dead ; and all this acted to signify, that the only Son of God was really and truly to be sacrific'd and dye, and after Death was really to be rais'd to Life.

What was the Intention of our Father *Abraham*, not perform'd ; that was the Resolution of our heavenly Father, and fulfill'd.

And thus was the Resurrection of the Messias represented by Types, and foretold by Prophesies, and therefore Christ was to rise from the Dead.

And now that *Jesus*, whom we believe to be Christ, did rise from the Dead, according to the Scriptures, is a most unquestionable Truth.

Those pious Women which design'd with sweet Spices to anoint him dead, held him by the Feet and worshipp'd him : And as the first Preachers of his Resurrection, with Fear and Joy ran to bring the Disciples Word ; the blessed Apostles follow them, to whom also he shewed himself alive, after his Passion, by many infallible Proofs, being seen of them by the Space of 40 Days, *Act* I. 3. which Apostles with great Power gave

gave Witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, *Act 5. 33.*

The rest of the Disciples likewise bare Witness of his Resurrection, to whom also he appear'd, even to 500 Brethren at once, *1 Cor. 15. 6.*

This is the Doctrine that St. Paul delivers to the *Corinthians*, from the 3d to the 9th of the same Chapter, how that *Christ died for our Sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was bury'd, and that he rose the third Day, according to the Scriptures*, and so on, as you may read at Leisure. This was the Testimony of Christ's own Disciples and Words; but so great a Truth is it that Christ rose from the Dead, that his very Enemies must own it.

Some of those Soldiers that were appointed by the *Jews* to watch over the Body of *Jesus*, that his Disciples might not steal it away; they which felt the Earth trembling under them, and saw the Countenance of an Angel like Lightening, and his Rayment white as Snow; they, who upon that Sight did shake, and became as dead Men, while he whom they watch'd became alive; even some of these came into the City,

and

and shewed unto the Chief Priests all the Things that were done.

And thus was the Resurrection of Christ confirm'd by the greatest human Testimony, both of Friends and Enemies, of his Followers and Revilers: Nay, an Angel from Heaven came down, and rolled back the Stone, and sate upon it. Nay, two Angels in White, sitting the one at the Head, and the other at the Feet, where the Body of Jesus had lain, said unto the Women, *Why seek ye the living among the Dead, he is not here, but is risen.*

But if we receive the Witness of Men or Angels, the Witness of God is greater, who did sufficiently attest his Resurrection; not only because there was no other Power could raise him from the Dead, but as our Saviour himself said, *The Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, shall testify of me,* adding these Words to his Apostles, *and ye shall bear Witness, because ye have been with me from the Beginning.*

The Spirit of God, sent down upon the Apostles, did thereby testify that Christ was risen, because he sent that Spirit from the Father; and the Apostles

stles witness'd, together with the Spirit, being enlighten'd, comforted, and confirm'd in their Testimony by the same Spirit. And thus God rais'd up Jesus, and shewed him openly, not to all the People, but unto Witnesses chosen before of God, even to those who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the Dead. And thus our Jesus rose again from the Dead, as it was foretold the Messias should.

It is true, all the Apostles doubted at the first; for when Christ stood in the midst of them, they were affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a Spirit; but he sufficiently convinc'd them that he had really taken his Body again.— *Handle me and see, for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have.*— And he fully satisfy'd them that it was the very same Body which he had before.— *Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I my self, and particularly unbelieving Thomas,— Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands, and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side, and be not faithless but believing.*— And to give us farther Satisfaction that his Soul and Body
was

was again united, and had Occasion for Meat for its Nourishment, he says unto them, *Have ye here any Meat?* And they gave him a Piece of a broil'd Fish and of a Honey-comb; and he took it and did eat before them: Likewise shewing himself unto them for the Space of Forty Days, seeing and hearing them, he convinc'd them he was the same *Jesus* that suffer'd for them, and gave Evidence that he was endued with the same rational and intellectual Soul again, by speaking to them, and discoursing out of the Scriptures concerning those Things which he spake unto them while he was yet with them.

Now as to which Person of the Blessed Trinity it was that raised up *Christ* from the Dead, it is express from Scripture, *Acts 2, 32.* *This Jesus bath God raised up,* saith the Apostle, *whereof we all are Witnesses.*

And generally in Scripture, both *Christ's* and our Resurrection is attributed to God, and after Death we cannot expect to be raised from the Dead by any Thing less than infinite and irresistible Power; for *Christ* himself was

was raised by God's Omnipotency, which is very well describ'd by the Apostle, that we may know what is the exceeding Greatness of his Power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of the Might of his Power which he wrought in *Christ* when he raised him up from the Dead: And therefore in the Scriptures the raising of *Christ* is attributed to God the Father, according to those Words of the Apostle—— Paul an Apostle, not of Men, neither by Men, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the Dead, Gal. i. 1. but not attributed to the Father only.

For to whomsoever the infinite Power belongs, by which *Christ* was raised from the Dead, that Person must be acknowledg'd to have raised him. Now the same Power belongs to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and therefore we must acknowledge the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost raised up *Christ* from the Dead: And thus much *Christ* told the Jews, *Destroy this Temple* (speaking of his Body) *and in three Days I will raise it up.* And in another Place he says, *I have Power to lay down my Life,*

Life, and I have Power to take it up again.

The laying down of Christ's Life was to die, the taking of it again was to revive, and live again ; and by this taking of his Life again, he shew'd himself to be the Resurrection, and the Life.—*For he which was made of the Seed of David according to the Flesh, was declared to be the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the Dead.*

And thus I have shew'd you, that the *Messias*, or *Christ*, promised in the Old Testament, was not only to die for us, but rise again from the Dead, or otherwise he would not be a perfect Saviour. I have prov'd that *Jesus of Nazareth*, whom we worship, did actually rise again from the Dead, and fulfill'd all that was foretold of him in that respect, and therefore is a perfect Saviour, since he ever liveth to make Intercession for us ; and now on him we may lay this firm Foundation of our Faith and Hope, that he is able to save them to the utmost that come unto God by him.

For

For if Jesus Christ, the Head, was able to raise up himself to Life, how shall he not be able to raise up us his Members? So that now we may rest in sure and certain Hope of the Resurrection to eternal Life, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile Body, that it may be like unto his glorious Body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all Things unto himself.

And now I am in the last Place to raise some proper Inferences from the whole.

That Christ did thus rise from the Dead is a most comfortable Consideration to us; for if Christ be not risen, then is our Faith in vain, we are yet in our Sins; but if he be, we are sure that he has deliver'd us from them, and we may cast the firm Anchor of all our Hopes in Christ Jesus.

1. By his rising again from the Dead we are assur'd, that he that dy'd was the Lord of Life; and tho' he were crucify'd thro' Weakness, yet he liveth by the Power of God, 2 Cor. 13. 4.

By his Resurrection from the Dead, he was declar'd to be the Son of God, Rom. 1. 4. and upon the Morning of the

the third Day, did those Words of the Father manifest a most important Truth — *Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee.*

By Christ's Death we are assur'd that he was a Man, by his Resurrection from the Dead we are assur'd that he was a God.

2. By the Resurrection we are assur'd of the Justification of our Persons, and if we believe on him that raised up Jesus Christ our Lord from the Dead, it will be imputed to us for Righteousness, Rom. 4. 24, 25. for he *was delivered for our Offences, and raised again for our Justification.*

By his Death we know that he suffer'd for Sin, by his Resurrection we are assur'd that the Sins for which he suffer'd were not his own : Had no Man been a Sinner, he had not dy'd ; had he been a Sinner, he had not risen again.

But by dying for those Sins which we committed, he rose from the Dead, to shew that he had made full Satisfaction for them, that we, believing in him, might obtain Remission of our Sins, and the Justification of our Persons. —

*God sending his own Son in the Likeness
of sinful Flesh, for Sin condemned Sin in
the Flesh, Rom. 8. 3.*

And raising up our Surety from the Prison of the Grave, did actually absolve and apparently acquit him from the whole Obligation, to which he had bound himself; and in discharging him, acknowledg'd a full Satisfaction made for us.—*Who then shall lay any thing
to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God
that justifieth, who is it that condemneth?
It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is
risen again.*

*3. The God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, according to his abundant
Mercy, hath begotten us again into a live-
ly hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ
from the dead, into an Inheritance incor-
ruptable and undefiled.*

For if, when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his Life.

He laid down his Life, but it was for us, and being to take up his own, he took up ours.

We are the Members of the Body, of which Christ is the Head; and if

the

the Head be risen, the Members can't be far behind.

He is the first born from the Dead, and we are the Sons of the Resurrection, *Col. 1. 18.*

The Spirit of *Christ* abiding in us, maketh us the Members of *Christ*, and by the same Spirit we have a full Right and Title to rise with our Head.

For if the Spirit of him that raised up *Jesus Christ* from the Dead, dwell in us, he that raised up *Christ* from the Dead, shall also quicken our mortal Bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us.

He shall change our vile Bodies, that they may be like unto his glorious Body; that as we have born the Image of the Earthy, we may also bear the Image of the Heavenly.

For as in Adam all die, even so in *Christ* shall all be made alive.

But *Christ* the first Fruits, afterward they that are *Christ's* at his coming.

4. And lastly, the Resurrection of *Christ* from the Dead, does oblige us to rise from the Death of Sin unto the Life of Righteousness.

Whend we were Dead in our Sins,
God hath quicken'd us together with
Christ, Eph. 2. 5. And as Christ was
raised up from the dead by the Glory of
the Father, even so should we walk in
newness of Life, Rom. 6. 4.

To continue among the Graves of
Sin while Christ is risen, is to incur the
Reprehension of the Angel; *Why seek
ye the living among the dead?*

To walk in any habitual Sin, is ei-
ther to deny that Sin is Death, or that
Christ is risen from the Dead.

Let then the Dead bury the Dead,
but let not any Christian bury him who
rose from Death that he might live.
*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from
the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,*
Eph. 5. 14.

There must be a Spiritual Resur-
rection of the Soul before there can
be a comfortable Resurrection of the
Body.

Wherefore, my Brethren, *Blessed and
Holy is he that hath Part in this first
Resurrection; on such the second Death
hath no Power.*



A

S E R M O N.

Matth. xvi. 24.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.



Mongst all the Precepts of Christianity, that before contain'd in these Words, is not only not the least considerable, but of highest Moment to be observ'd ; the very Life and Strength of Christianity is comprehended in it ; the very Soul of Religion consists in the due Performance

of it; and unless a Man embrace Christianity, and engage Religion with a stedfast Resolution, and a Mind arm'd with Courage to practice this Rule, notwithstanding all Temptations, or even Opposition to the contrary, he is not rightly dispos'd for the Undertaking; not fit to be admitted into the Christian Religion; so that as *Plato* writ upon his School, *Let none enter here that understands not Mathematicks,* may be set as a Motto upon the Entrance of a Christian Life, *Let none enter here that wants Courage and Resolution, to encounter all Temptations and Difficulties.* The Way to Heaven is not smooth or easy, but rough and rugged, and insuperable to Sloth and Cowardice; nay, not only has a Christian many outward and grievous Calamities to wrestle through, but he has also to offer Violence to the natural Bent and Propensity of his Inclinations, to check and restrain his Appetites, to curb his Passions, to bridle and keep in his Lusts, to refrain himself, to keep his Body under, that the Spirit, the inner Man, being freed from those Clogs of Devotion, those Fogs which cloud the Soul, might be at

at full Liberty to exert itself, and exercise the Offices of Religion; and, with a more refin'd Purity, cleans'd from the Alloy of worldly Avocations or Distractions, might be employ'd about the Service and Worship of God. Christianity obliges us to live by Rule, and not to steer at Random; we are not to yield to every roving Fancy, every idle Conceit; certain Limits and Bounds of Duty are prescrib'd,

Quos ultra, citaque nequit consistere rectum;

if we do not keep within the Compafs of these, we forfeit our Discipleship, if we have engag'd in it, or incapacitate our selves, if we be about to enter upon it. Such Softness and Effeminity, as to be drawn away by worldly Pleasures and Delights, to yield our selves Slaves to our Lusts and Passions, to be born away with the Torrent of the Debauchery of the Age wherein we live, to bend or twine any Way for secular Interests and Advantages, to avoid Persecutions, Calamities, or the like, for the sake of Religion, is a very unfit Disposition for Christian

Warfare, nor are such fit to be listed into the Number of Christ's Soldiers, who are not to shrink from Virtue thro' Allurements, not to desert a good Cause to avoid Danger. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.*

And here, in the first Place, you may observe what Method our Saviour took to advance the Christian Religion ; *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me.*

II. I shall shew the Nature of Self-denial, and wherein it consists.

III. I shall shew the Reasonableness of it. And,

Lastly, Shall offer a proper Argument to induce us to it.

And here, in the first Place, you may observe, what Method our Saviour took to advance the Christian Religion ; he proposes his own Suffering an Example to them, and Self-denial. Then said

Jesus

Jesus to his Disciples, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.* This is all the Invitation he makes to draw Disciples after him ; he makes no Promises of any worldly Wealth and Grandeur, of any earthly Pomp or Magnificence ; which would (as the World goes) have been very strong Motives to encrease the Number of his Disciples, and to draw many Followers after him : But nothing of this kind is offer'd by him ; no Profits, no secular Interests, no earthly Pleasures or Enjoyments, no Land of *Canaan* flowing with Milk and Honey ; but rather an *Egyptian* Slavery and hard Task-masters, severe Calamities and Persecutions ; we have no Gratuity for indulging our importunate Lusts and Appetites, but a positive Command for restraining them, when they grow exorbitant and unreasonable in their Demands ; he would have us to be as stedfast and unshaken against the most flattering Insinuations of worldly Gains and Pleasures, when they stand not true to our Duty, as he himself was against the largest and most extravagant

gant Offers of *Satan*, when he was tempted of him in the Wilderness ; when any Offers of less Proportion (for he will never make that large Offer to any single Man again, nor would he have done it then, but that he might have destroy'd all, had he been successful in that Point, but now scatters and divides the Temptation amongst Mankind) when any Offers of less Proportion, I say, are made to us upon the like Terms, we should say as himself did, *Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* So that our Duty is not press'd upon us by any worldly Encouragement ; but, on the contrary, is recommended to us against all the Frowns of the World, or the Importunity of its Temptations ; against all the Threats of the Power and Malice of Men, all their Madness and Fury against us ; and against all the greatest Damages and Losses we may incur, by stedfastly adhering to it ; our Religion is stript naked of all temporal Advantages to promote or secure the embracing of it ; our Religion is to be good for Goodness sake,

sake, whatever Evil we may suffer upon that Account ; it is to oppose the common Practice, and contradict the Custom of the World ; and therefore no Wonder, if it draws the Hatred of the World upon us ; and therefore our Saviour tells his Disciples, *John 15. 19.*
If ye were of the World, the World would love his own ; but because ye are not of the World, but I have chosen you out of the World, therefore the World hateth you. And if it do, however we have this Comfort to be like our Saviour in Sufferings, who tells us, in the foregoing Verse, *If the World hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.* The Christian Religion is so far from having any Countenance given it from the World, that there is not a greater Enemy to it ; and a Man that is a Friend of this World, that lives as it does, and draws in the same Yoke with it, cannot be a Friend of God, nor a Disciple of Christ ; so that you see our Religion has no Encouragement from the World, to further its Reception in it ; our Saviour has made Use of no such Shifts to propagate or support it. Nor, as he does not recommend his Religion

Religion to Mankind, for any worldly Advantages or Interest it is apt to promote, so neither does he, by violent Means, compel us to embrace it ; it is fairly propos'd to Men, and with all the forementioned Disadvantages and Discouragements ; and if they will believe and practise it, they may ; if not, he will lay no Force upon Mens Minds ; Virtue and Goodness are propos'd to them, without any worldly Garnish or Paint to set them off ; if we do not admire them for their own Beauties, and court them for their own Charms, we may let them alone ; they will not be thrust upon us ; we need not be listed in the Christian Warfare against our Will and Inclination ; if we will come in voluntarily, and of our own free Choice, well and good ; but if not, he will never hawl us into his Service : He will not plunge Men into the baptismal Water, nor cram the sacramental Bread, or pour the Wine down their Throats, without their Consent. It is not in few Places a Custom to fright Men into their Religion, by the Terror of Punishment, by dreadful Anathema's, exquisite Tortures, and the like ; but

but this was never our Saviour's Design to gain over Disciples ; as, indeed, Men are created with Reason, he expects they should prudently use that Reason, and so choose according to the wise Dictates of it ; but if they will not make right Use of it, in his ordinary Dealings with Mankind he has prepared no Remedy for it, but rather laid a heavy Curse upon such Obstinatey, *That seeing they shall see and not perceive, and bearing they shall bear and not understand.* And thus you see what Means our Saviour makes use of to advance his Religion ; he has no worldly Profits or Advantages, no Pleasures earthly to recommend it ; but on the contrary, his Disciples are to encounter a deal of Difficulties, to wean their Affections from the World, and to endure the most grievous Evils for the sake of it, if call'd thereto. But I proceed, in the

Second Place, to shew the Nature of Self-Denial, or wherein it consists.

And here Self-denial is nothing else, in plain Terms, than to be willing to part with any Thing that is most dear to us, yea, and freely to deliver up

Life

Life itself, if it be requir'd of us, for the Sake of our Religion.

And now, that this is the true and proper Meaning of the Text, nothing is more apparent, and several Texts of Scripture there are that will sufficiently confirm it. And the immediate Words that precede the Text plainly intimate thus much : For after our Saviour hath said, *he that will come after me, must deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me,* he forthwith adds, *that whosoever will save his Life, shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his Life for my sake, shall find it.* Tho' the Cruelty of Persecutions may take away his Life in this World, yet he shall find it in the next ; he shall rise again unto Life eternal, while those that thro' Fear forsake him, shall lose their Life, descend into Hell and eternal Death. He commands us in another Place to pluck out a right Eye, or cut off a right Hand, that is, to part with Things that are most dear to us, if they offend us, if we by them be misled from our Duty. And Matt. 10. 37, 38. *He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me. He that loveth*

Son

Son or Daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and He that taketh not up his Cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me; with many Expressions to the like Purpose, which all evidently shew the Meaning of the Text, that nothing should be so dear to us, but we can renounce and forsake it, if by the keeping of it we shall either plainly break or but hazard the due Discharge of our Duty; for let Things be as near or dear to us as they possibly can, yet they cannot so much concern us as our Salvation: There are no Profits so considerable as will make Amends for the Loss of our Souls; no Pleasures so full of Satisfaction and Comfort, as can countervail to eternal Miseries: So that thus the Matter stands, we cannot serve God and Mammon, Religion and our secular Interests; they interfere one with another, and can have no more Communion than Light with Darkness, than Christ with *Belial*. We must then, according to this Rule, give a Check to our Lusts and Passions, to our hankering after the Pleasures and Delights of this World, and we must chearfully sacrifice all these to the Delight we take

in serving God, our dear Redeemer; For he that loveth Houses or Lands, Father or Mother, Honour or Wealth, or any Things that naturally are or seem to be most dear to us, even Life itself, more than Christ, is not worthy to be his Disciple. Those that are his Disciples or Servants, he will have them so entirely to himself ; he cannot bear a Rival in our Affections, or any Sharer in them ; we must not divide 'em betwixt the World and him : We may indeed love the good and comfortable Things of this World, but we must acknowledge them as Blessings that come from his Hands ; for, from him, for his Honour, all Things both are and were created, and therefore we must take care to use them to that Purpose, and not to abuse them to other Ends, to the gratifying of our Lusts and Appetites, like brute Beasts, that have no Understanding : All the Creatures of God are good, and deserve our highest Gratitude ; but we still pervert them into Evils to ourselves, by an inordinate and immoderate Use of them ; we shall turn Blessings into Curses, wholesome Food into Poison to our Souls.

Our

Our Religion ties us, and indeed our Health too, to use God's Creatures moderately, and not lavish 'em away extravagantly upon our Lusts, or to gratify silly and fantastical Humours, and not use 'em as Incentives to Concupiscence and Sin, and make 'em Matter both for Shame and Folly. And here give me Leave to particularly speak of Intemperateness, which is a Vice to which our present Age so much disposes us ; and herein I doubt we are arriv'd to that Pitch, that it may be deservedly said of us, that we deserve to be punish'd by Poverty into a more sober and modest Use of God's Creatures. The Case of Intemperance is a Thing, I believe, we as little exercise the Virtue of Self-denial in as any other. It begins to be, if it be not already, accounted a commendable Quality to be stout at it, and to come off Victors at the shameful Bacchanals ; but this is a Practice that prodigiously disagrees with what the Grace of God, that hath appeared unto all Men, hath taught us, namely, *to deny ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World:* Now is it

not a famous Conquest, to see thy Brother wallowing in Sin, and, to increase the Melancholy of the Consideration, a Sin which thou thyself hast been instrumental to; and therefore, as thou hast been accessory in the Committing, art like to share in the Punishment of it: Press but this Consideration home upon thy Soul, and then, if thou canst like the Wages, fall to the Work: But 'tis our little Heed to the Mischief we do, both to ourselves and others, that makes us engage in such disgraceful and scandalous Practices; but it may be, we shall be sufficiently convinc'd of the Odiouſneſſ and Danger of such Frolicks, if we can but bring ourſelves into the Temper to think once ſeriously upon 'em.

H. A great Piece of Self-denial conſists in withdrawing of our Affections from those Things that are the reputed Blessings of this World, and are emphatically ſo accounted, that no one is, according to the vulgar Notion, to be esteem'd happy without 'em, I mean Riches, Honour, or the like.

And

And now none can gainsay, but that these are in their own Nature truly Blessings, and the Gift of God; but the best of Things may be perverted to ill Uses, and change their Nature into a Curse: Not that the Things themselves can properly change their Nature, but 'tis an Indisposition in our own Hearts, that like a distemper'd Stomach, turns wholesome Food into Corruption, and draws a Mischief upon ourselves out of good Things.

For instead of using God's Gifts, according to the Direction of Reason, for the Support of our Necessities and the Comforts of Life, we convert 'em into an Idol, and make 'em our God; and tho' we do not build Temples and Shrines to 'em, yet we do the same in Effect, and nothing has any degree of our Affections, Esteem, or even Reliance, in comparison of them. We build the Foundation of our Happiness upon 'em, and launch out for it upon this only Bottom: We trust in the Multitude of our Riches, and strengthen ourselves in our Wickedness: We postpone the Care of our Souls to our worldly Concerns; we will serve our Interests

before God, and our ambitious Designs must not be crucify'd ; whatsoever becomes of Religion, we will not check our Lust, oppose our Passion, cross our Desire, deny any Appetite, or keep ourselves back from Sin, in Compliance with our Saviour's Command ; tho' he has gave it as a Condition of our Discipleship, that if Need require, if our Virtue can be no other Way secured, we must forsake all and follow him.

And therefore it stands us upon, if we intend to be Christ's Disciples, in such a Manner to resolve to be so, that nothing can shake us off, or force us from our Duty ; Nothing, not any insinuating Temptations, not any worldly Allurements, not any worldly Gains or Interests, not any Honours or Dignities, not the very Fears and Terrors of Death itself, should make us forsake the Precepts of Christ, or comply with anything that is fordid or base, dishonourable or sinful to our Profession : Whatever is not forbidden nor destructive of the Nature of our Religion, we may embrace, but what appears not clearly to be so, is to be avoided by us. We must shun the very Appearance of Evil.

We

We have a greater Liberty, especially in relation to Meats, and in other respects too, than the *Jewish* People had, but yet this must still be our great Cau-tion, not to use our Liberty for an Occasion of Sin; our Liberty is not to be stretch'd out into Inordinacy and Ex-cess, but to be kept within some rea-sonable Bounds and Compass, and not to fly out into Extravagancy and Licenti-ousness upon every Occasion.

If any worldly Thing or Enjoyment seem to offer fair for, and promise much of, Happiness, yet we must not let go our Duty to embrace it, what-ever it be: If we may receive it or en-joy it, and can hold our Integrity, and keep a good Conscience, well and good; or else we should unconcernedly let it pass from us, as a Thing not worth our Notice, in comparison of our in-finitely greater Concerns. We disin-he-rit ourselves of all the Interest of Hea-ven in our Saviour, if we give Way to any secular Benefits, take up with any earthly Satisfactions, not consider-ing how contradictory they are to the grand Design of the Gospel, which re-quires a great deal of Purity and Sin-

cerity in our Actions, and in our Hearts too. And that it will be very profitable for answering the Designs of our Redemption, if we duly and seriously reflect upon every Action before we engage in it, and maturely weigh Things before we adventure to put 'em into Practice; and to that Purpose we may, to great Advantage, pose our selves with the following Questions, and examine our Hearts by God's Laws, whether what they are conceiving in order to Action be within the degrees of Christian Liberty, or is likely to exceed 'em, and to pass the Bounds: Is what I am about to do lawful, or not to be done? I own myself to be of the Christian Religion, and to be a Disciple and Follower of Christ; shall I tread in his Steps, follow his Example, and that holy Pattern that he hath left us for our Conversation, if I adventure on such or such an Action? Shall I in this Thing copy my Life after his, as far as human Infirmitie will permit? If after a diligent Disquisition I find nothing to the contrary, no Contradiction in the Action to the Precepts of the Gospel, we may heartily go on with it; but

but if I discover a plain Repugnancy in it to the Laws of God, or even but a seeming Danger of breaking 'em; see thou do it not; now is the Time for the Exercise of that Self-denial: And yet, if still thou wilt engage in such an Action, thou mayest be thy own Judge in the Case, how mean and indifferent a Servant and Disciple thou art to Christ, who can't forego the gratifying of thy Lusts and Appetites, for the sake of him who could deny himself of any Thing, even of Life itself for thy sake: Blush and be ashain'd of thy self, tho' there was no farther Reason in it, that thou hast made such ungrateful and wretched Returns. Could our Saviour live a miserable and contemptible Life for us, be the Scorn and Scoff of Mankind? Could he that made all Things be content not to have a Place where to lay his Head; be a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief? And will not this Consideration work upon us to mortify our Lusts, to restrain our Passions, and to abridge our selves a little in the Conveniencies of Life, even when the doing of it will tend both to our bodily and spiritual

Health, whereas too plentiful an Enjoyment of 'em will lessen and diminish both? Nay, can't we, for his sake, bear even Afflictions and the most grievous Sufferings, the Cross itself, who for us willingly underwent the most heavy Afflictions and Sufferings, and a most ignominious and shameful Death upon the Cross? If we be not in Readiness of Mind prepar'd and dispos'd in every kind, to write after this remarkable Copy of Self-denial, we are not fit to be his Disciples: He that will be truly his Disciple, must love him above all Things, nor love anything but for his sake, nor use it but according to his Commands, nor stick at suffering or undergoing any Evil when he is call'd to it; and, in short, must match the Pattern of his Saviour's Life as near as he can. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.*

And now I come, in the third Place, to shew the Reasonableness of Selfdenial.

And

And first 'tis reasonable, because without it we cannot truly serve God. If it be a reasonable Duty in us to serve God, (which is so unquestionably true, that I need offer no Argument for it) then 'tis reasonable for us to deny ourselves in those Things that will either totally withdraw, or in Part remove our Affections from him, and so destroy absolutely, or mightily weaken, the Sinews of Duty, of that Obedience which we owe to him. But 'tis plain, if our Hearts be fix'd too much on this dirty Globe on which we dwell, they will not be in a Capacity to mount up to Heaven in that Alacrity and Zeal of Devotion which is necessary to make our Service acceptable : When they should be rais'd up to the Regions of Bliss in pious Hymns and Hallalujah's, they will be ty'd down and fasten'd to the Earth : If we lay up our Treasure on Earth, or what is much the same, doat much upon earthly Things, where our Treasure is, where our Affections centre the stronglyest, there will be, nay, there is our Heart also. And if the good Things of this World fill up our Hearts,

Hearts, and take up all our Affections, what Room will there be for God, or what Heart shall we have to serve him, when our Heart is perfectly taken up with, and in Pursuit of another Object? *We cannot serve God and Mammon : We cannot serve two Masters, but either we shall hate the one and love the other, or hold to the one and despise the other.* And if so, the Case is plain to what Part our Service will be found defective; for if we be resolv'd to enjoy the World and our Lusts, 'tis a bare-fac'd Truth that we design to neglect the Service of God, and are hir'd to the Slavery and Bondage of Sin, tho' it offer no other Wages than Death; whereas the Gift of God is eternal Life thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. But perhaps we do not so absolutely renounce God, and invert the express Words of the baptismal Vow, but we intend, in the main, to serve God, to praise and reverence his holy Word, only we hope he will make some small Allowance to human InfirmitieS, if now and then, thro' the numerous and insinuating Temptations that are in the World, we be drawn into Sin, then

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we may, perhaps, speak in the Language of the Psalmist, if God be extreme, to mark what is done amiss,
who then shall be able to abide? And indeed 'tis very true, that God will make Allowances for human Infirmities ; but then let us consider of what Nature these Infirmities are : Are they real Infirmities that we cannot conquer ? Have we used our utmost Endeavours to correct them ? I know human Nature is press'd with a vast Load of Corruption since the Fall ; but yet God has promis'd us vast Helps to purify and cleanse that Corruption ; and if Men will not use the Means, but willingly continue in their sickly State, that's their own, and none of the grand Physician's Fault : God does not expect that we should live without Sin, nor can we expect to arrive at that Perfection in this World, *If a Man say that he has no Sin, he deceiveth himself;* but then there is a great deal of Difference betwixt a Man's being a little indispos'd, because 'tis the Effect of his Constitution, and his Rashness in running into those Practices which he knows will mightily increase and inflame

flame his Distemper : Or a Man that sins, because he can't altogether avoid it, and like the Volunteer, rushes into Sin, like a Horse into the Battel ; so that the common Pleas for human Infirmitie are generally, if not altogether, very weak ; and the plain Case is, because our Hearts are taken up with the World and its Pleasures, with which we are loth to part ; we fancy Difficulties where there are none, and have a Mind to impose upon God, and shuffle in downright and wilful Sins, under the Name of Infirmitie.

But again, tho' our Thoughts of Religion, and of God, be nothing but right and good, and a Man principally intends to reverence and worship him, only he hopes he will pass over a few Miscarriages now and then ; and, like Nazman, he may express himself, 2 King. v. 17, 18. *Thy Servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering, nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD. In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my Master goeth into the house of Rimmon, to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon : when I bow down myself*

myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.

The Man is fully convinc'd, that he ought only to bow down before God, and worship him ; but if now and then the Company he keeps draw him from his Duty, if strong Temptations fall in his Way, and dispose him to Sin, then, if he bow down to serve his Interest and Sins, — *The Lord pardon thy Servant in this Thing ; it is against the Convictions of Conscience that I do it : Pardon, O Lord, thy Servant in this Thing, which I wou'd never have committed, but only for fear of disobliging a Friend, or turning off my Lusts and Inclinations without their Quarry.* What will the Lord say to such a Prayer ? With what Eyes will he look upon the Sin ? Will he turn that End of the Prospective which makes Things appear much less than they really are, and look upon the Sin as a Trifle, in Comparison ? There is no great Hopes of his being dismiss'd in the Words that *Elisha did Naaman*, — *Go in Peace.* This is so palpable and gross an Evasion of Duty, that it may be felt : When a Man fears the Dis-pleasure of Men more than God, and loves

loves to embrace the Temptations to Sin better than his Duty : And, in short, that Man will break thro' all the Obligations of Duty, upon Occasion, and all the Precepts of Christianity signify nothing to him, when other Temptations offer themselves ; he sits loose to his Principles, and the only Thing he is found in, is to be wicked and profane upon every Opportunity as oft as he can ; and the true Definition of such Self-Denial is, that the Man will deny himself in nothing, unless he have no Temptation to it.

3. And, farther, the Duty of Self-denial is reasonable ; because, without it, we can never so gain that Dominion and Conquest over our Sins and Lusts, as to make our Calling and Election sure. It is written, if a Man fail in one Point, he is a Transgressor of the whole Law. This is not meant of Sins of Infirmitie, properly so call'd, but of reigning Sins, which we do not offer to restrain : and tho' a Man might be an exact Observer of the whole, only he continues in the known Breach of one Part of it, this disannuls all the other Parts of Duty perform'd, and

and makes 'em of no Effect, as if they had never been done: And if a Man die in one Sin, of this Nature, unrepented of, 'tis enough to damn him. God does not require of us a partial, but a total Obedience, as far as we are able: And if a Man should in a serious Mood, in the Time of Sicknes, or upon a Death-bed, (which will create serious Thoughts, if any Thing will) if he should then thank God that he has not been as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or the like, not but that he may acknowledge himself to have been guilty of some Infirmities, yet, the Man that freely and frankly confesses his Sins, shall go down to his House justify'd sooner than he. Tho' we may but think our Sins to be small and venial, yet, I doubt, they will be represented to us in another Manner; when they come to be put into the Ballance, then we shall see their Weight.

So that we must not content ourselves with the subduing of one Sin, nor of many, we must do our utmost to subdue all: And if we do our utmost, then will the Way be laid open for Allowances:

ances : Otherwise, Christianity does not give any Indulgence to Sin, nor license Men to fulfil one Part of the Law and break another ; and the Man's Life that is chequer'd with such remarkable Transgressions of Duty, can but give him small Hopes, either in Health or Sickness ; tho' he may seem, in some Measure, to have broken the Bonds of Iniquity, yet he is still in Slavery, *& trahitur collo pars longa Catenæ*, the Badges of his Bondage still appear ; he is still not the Servant of God, but of Sin.

Lastly, Let the Example of our blessed Lord and Saviour teach us the Duty of Self-denial, which is the most perfect Example, in this Kind, that can be propos'd for our Practice.

He tells us, *he came not to do his own will, but the will of his heavenly father, that sent him* ; and was so submissive, in this Kind, and even when the bitter Cup was offer'd to him, (tho' he did pray, as we may lawfully do, *that such bitter Cups may pass from us*) yet *not my will but thine be done* : If the Son of God could so eminently deny himself

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the same, it may well be expected of his Disciples.

We have the greatest Reason thus to deny ourselves as far as we are able, and courageously to follow the Captain of our Salvation ; for if we do not deny ourselves for his Sake, as he was pleas'd to deny himself for ours, we are not worthy to be his Disciples. He tells us, *Luke 14. 26,* *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple* ; that is, if a Man set not slight by any Thing in the World, in comparison of his Duty, *he cannot be my disciple* ; so that you see here a great Reason for Self-denial, even in the Things that are dearest to us ; our Duty is still to be lov'd above all, and before all : Nay, we must part with a Right Hand or an Eye, the Things that we are loathest to part with, if Religion requires it ; nothing is too dear to be sacrific'd to it ; and 'tis much better to enter into Heaven, having one Hand or one Eye, than having both to be cast into Hell Fire ; we had better part with the most be-

lov'd Things for the Sake of Heaven, than to perish with 'em in our Bosom. And therefore we shou'd either abridge ourselves in, or part, with the most darling Things, as Need requires; and not only so, but be ready to undergo the severest Usage for our Religion patiently: This is nothing but our Duty; and thus much Christ expects from us; and the doing of it is very acceptable to God: *This is thank-worthy, 1 Pet. ii. 19, &c. if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God.* For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffer'd for us, leaving us an Example, that we should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatned not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: So that if we profess ourselves to be Christians, we have the greatest Reason to deny ourselves, as to worldly Enjoyments

ments or Interests, when they are inconsistent with Religion : We must sacrifice our Lusts and Passions, our Pleasures and our Profits to our Duty ; and not only so, but always be dispos'd in Readiness of Heart to endure any thing for the Sake of our Profession. Hereunto we are call'd ; and if it please God to exercise us with Afflictions, 'tis no more than our Saviour has suffer'd : We must follow his Steps, always remembering that this is thank-worthy, if a Man for Conscience towards God suffers wrongfully.

And thus I have shew'd you what Method our Saviour took in settling Christianity in the World. He offers no worldly Advantages, neither Honours, Pleasures, nor Profits ; he offers no Compulsion to Mens Minds, only proposes Religion to 'em fairly. — *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

2dly, I have shew'd wherein the Nature of Self-denial consists, to be willing to part with any thing, or suffer any thing, for the Sake of Religion.

3dly, I have given some Reasons for the Practice of this Duty, because otherwise we cannot faithfully serve God, nor come up to that Pattern of holy Life, which was so eminent in our Saviour.

And now I come to offer one Motive, to perswade Men to the Practice of this Duty, which also may be as an Argument to shew the Reasonableness of it. And I shall endeavour to perswade Men to the Practice of this Duty of Self-denial, from our Saviour's Command, and so conclude.

If we call our Saviour, Lord, Lord, and own him for our Master, then sure we shall not stand out, to fulfil the Commands of our Lord and Master. I am sure Men used to do thus much to their earthly Masters : If they say to one, come, he cometh ; to another, go, and he goeth ; to another, do this, and he doeth it. If therefore so much Respect and Obedience can be shewn to earthly Masters, if their Orders and Injunctions shall be observ'd with so much Exactness and Diligence, with so much Fear of disobliging, with what a Readiness and Alacrity of Mind, with

with what Caution and Care should the Commands of our Great Master and dread Sovereign, in Heaven, be fulfilled? If we can pay a ready Obedience to Men, how can we deny the same to God? If we can freely serve Men for temporal Interests and Advantages, shou'd we not be much sooner willing to serve our Saviour for the eternal Benefit of our Souls, and to take those Measures, and follow those Directions that he has prescrib'd? For, otherwise, in vain shall we apply our selves to the Physician of our Souls for Cure, if we will not observe his Orders; we shall both increase our Distemper, and render it incurable, and shall be given up by the Physician, as desperately bent upon our own Ruin. To make therefore the Care of our Saviour for our Souls successful, we must follow his Orders and Commands, and use such Physick as he prescribes for our Recovery; and what Orders he gives us, you have in the Words of the Text, *Then said Jesus to his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross:* As also, *Mark viii. 34.* As also *Luke ix.*

So that the Terms of our Discipleship are very plain and obvious, and the Methods we are to take for our Salvation are very intelligible : We must deny ourselves as to the Honours, Pleasures, or Profits of this World ; and also, if there be Occasion, take up our Cross, undergo the severest Things, for the Sake of Christ, rather than forsake him ; nay, we must in Readiness of Mind be prepar'd to forsake all and follow him. And now, if we heartily embrace the Christian Religion, we must not stick at the seeming Difficulty of the Command, but bear the Yoke that is laid upon our Necks with all Patience and Long-suffering. And tho' it may seem to Flesh and Blood a little heavy to be borne, yet, all Things consider'd, we may take his own Word for it, *that his yoke is easy and his burden light.* Our Saviour, therefore, having commanded us to deny ourselves, as to this World, it behoves us to comply with the Command ; *'tis Christ himself that came to deliver us from our Sins, and to save us ; that enjoyns us so to do ; and if we do not, we renounce our Discipleship*

ship and forsake Christianity; and if any of his Disciples think this a hard Saying, and from henceforth will walk no more with him, it cannot be help'd; if they like not the Command, they must abandon the Religion, with all its future Interests. But, methinks, it is a heavy Reproach upon Man, when he can expose his Health, his Life, and Fortune, for the Sake of the World, and yet cannot bring his Heart, in one Particular, to deny himself for the Sake of his dear Redeemer, nay for his own Sake: It is a down-right Contempt or Neglect of the divine Authority, and a Kind of silent Disbelief of his Promises ; it is, in Effect, to slight and vilify the Measures he has laid down for our Salvation ; 'tis a Rebellion against his Commands, and, in some Sort, declares our Minds, that we will no longer have him Lord over us, but will live according to the Dictates of our own Lusts and Inclinations, notwithstanding all he has threaten'd and commanded to the contrary ; it shews the Disposition of our Minds, that tho' he has call'd us out of the World and from the

sinful Lusts and Practices of it, yet we are resolv'd, still, to be of the World, and to wallow in its Sins ; to esteem more the Smiles and Countenance of the World, than his Indignation and Displeasure ; that we will not mortify one Lust, bridle one Passion, subdue one Appetite, deny ourselves of any Pleasure and Satisfaction, when the chief Lord and grand Sovereign of the Universe commands us, when our suffering bleeding Saviour calls and invites us to it, when eternal Happiness is offer'd to us for abridging ourselves of transitory Joys, which must be a Sin of such a provoking and displeasing Nature to God, that we cannot, upon any good Grounds, think it will fall short of sharing in the bitterest Cup of God's Wrath and Indignation, of having its Portion with Hypocrites and Sinners.



A

S E R M O N.

Psalm xxxix. 8.

*And now, Lord, what is my hope ; truly
my hope is even in thee.*



HERE is but one main Ingredient that makes Life have any Gust or Relish in it, that helps to spin out our Days with any Satisfaction and Comfort to us, that eases and allays all our Labours and Pains, and makes us live on to the Close of a natural Life comfortably, and that is *Hope*.

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However we are disappointed and baulk'd by every Thing that promis'd and look'd big with Satisfaction, Content, and Good, however the swelling Bubble proves but Wind ; however the gay Rainbow proves but Colour, however, the appearing Substance proves but a Phantom and Shadow ; yet still we are not quite worsted, but begin our Hopes afresh ; we renew our Expectations, and look for better, even from those very Things that perform worse and worse every Day : Thus on we go to our Lives End, waiting and expecting for we know not what Good, from we know not what Hand, very often ; have no certain fix'd Aim for an Object of our Hope, or but an ill one, that can yield our craving Appetites and Capacities no Satisfaction. Thus it comes to pass, that we are ever grasping and reaching out our Arms for some Good or other, which, when compass'd, leaves us as craving and dissatisfy'd as before.

This the holy *Psalmist* says, and understood very well, when he distinguish'd so well betwixt Man and all human and mortal Good, and God, the ever-

everlasting Good, and fix'd his Hope so firmly on the latter, where a full Satisfaction could only be found.

Behold, says he, in the two foregoing Verses, *Thou hast made my days, as it were, a span long, and mine age is even as nothing, and verily every man living is altogether vanity. For man walks in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.*

Were this World to continue for ever, and the Goods the World contains everlasting in their own Nature, what wou'd they signify to, or benefit us, so long as we must die, and leave 'em behind us ; and not only leave 'em behind us, but we know not to whom?

But, alas ! so uncertain are any of us of our best Things in their Enjoyment, shall I say, or rather Possession, that the next Minute to that which brought 'em, may take 'em away, and what is ours to Day, may be another's to Morrow. We must be remov'd from the dearest Things we value most in this World, and very commonly they are

are remov'd from us before it come to that. As for what we call our Riches, our Treasure, we may call 'em our God, if we will be so wicked, and make 'em so too, if we will be so foolish, yet we must leave 'em to a Successor.

And tho' he be a Son, yet we know not whether we have left them to him or no: He may be a Fool, then they are left a Prey to Knaves and Villains; he may be wicked, and a Prodigal, and then they become the Booty of Harlots, and evil Men.

So true is that which the Psalmist says, *heaps up riches, cannot tell who shall gather them.*

Since, therefore, there is little or no Glimmering of Hope in this Life, no appearing Beam of Satisfaction within the Round of Mortality, and that all here below, is *vanity and vexation of spirit*: Now, that I see this, *Lord, what is my hope? truly my hope is even in thee.* I will set my affections on things above, not on things below. I'll turn my eyes from earth to heaven, and in heaven fix them only up-

on thee. For whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire, in comparison of thee.

In these Words there's nothing of Difficulty; nothing hard to be understood: Word for Word they may be translated thus: *And now what have I expected, O Lord, my hope, in thee, it is, or, as for my hope, it is in thee.*

And they may be thus farther paraphras'd: *And now, Lord, whose Servant I am by Possession, by Creation, by Redemption, by Preservation: What is this after which my Heart is carry'd out with such a wonderful Desire of enjoying it? What is this I am so sorry and troubled to want the Fruition of? What is this I with such fiduciary Dependance upon it thus patiently wait for? What is it that the Collection, the main Body and Stream of my Thoughts and Desires meet together in, as in one Point and Centre? What is it that they thus perpendicularly, and in a streight Line fall upon? They center not in this World, but in thee; they fall not on this Life, but on Heaven and God.*

From

From these Words thus explain'd, I shall make these two Remarks for the Doctrinal and main Hinge of the following Discourse,

- I. That 'tis mere Madness and Folly to make any one Thing, or Good, or more of 'em, or all the Mass of earthly Goods, our Hope, our Aim and End. And under this Head I shall shew when Men do so.
- II. That 'tis the greatest Prudence to make God and Religion our Hope, and Aim, and our utmost End. And under this, I shall shew when Men do make God their Hopes. And,
- I. That 'tis mere Madness and Folly to make any one Thing, &c.
For what can be more imprudent and indiscreet than to make that our End which will have an End ; to rest upon that whence we must be shak'd off ; and to lean upon that with our whole Weight,

Weight, which will shortly, we know not how soon, be pluck'd from under us ? We must have an End of our Being, and so must all other Things have of theirs ; and for us, Tenants at Will to the universal Lord, that must be remov'd from our Farms shortly, may be next Week, next Day, next Minute, the next Moment ; for us, I say, to place our Good, our Rest, our Dependance and Reliance, our greatest Hope, our Happiness, (for there is our greatest Happiness, where our Hope is) to fix our Foot, and settle down in this uncertain Dwelling-place, which may, perhaps, out-last our Lives, perhaps not, is Indiscretion and Folly with a Witness.

It is not my present Purpose to run thro' the whole Creation, to shew the Insufficiency of all the Goods contain'd in it, to make us happy ; nor shall I shew the Vanity and Emptiness of every idoliz'd Darling, which worldly Men have made their God, and plac'd their Happiness in ; neither need I do this, which has been done so excellently well to my Hand by the wisest of Men, who hath stamp'd upon all Things,

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not only Vanity, but Vexation of Spirit. There is one famous Passage in the Gospel, which will serve to prove this, by giving an Instance of the Vanity of one of the most idoliz'd Goods, (which has long contended for the chiefest) without heaping more Arguments from Scripture or Reason together, —— which is that of St. Luke, 12. 16 to 22. and which is a most convincing Argument of the Madness of trusting in uncertain Riches, (if God has bless'd us with 'em) if indeed any Argument can convince Men of the Madness and Folly of it.—Christ spake a Parable to the Multitude, but to his Disciples first of all, saying, *The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plenteously ; and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits ? And he said, This will I do : I will pull down my barns, and build greater ; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods ; and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* But God said unto him, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of*

of thee : then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided ? So is he, saith the Truth itself, Christ Jesus, that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God ; so is he. What is he ? In plain Terms, *A Fool.* Our Lord and Saviour, himself, gives him no better a Name. To this, the great Steward of the Mysteries of the Gospel, Christ's Great Apostle, St. Paul, gives his Suffrage, That the Love of Money, and consequently placing Happiness upon it, pierces Men thro' *with many sorrows,* *1 Tim. 6. 10.* And surely he cannot be very wise, however he may seem so in his own Conceit, that may be more easy, and in less Torment and Pain, by valuing it (and all other Things) at no greater Rate than they are really worth, by using it as a Traveller does a Well, for the Refreshment of his thirsty Spirits, not by making it his Hope or Confidence.

In short, a dreadful Woe is thunder'd against all them who confine their ultimate End to this dirty Globe on which we tread, and *join house to house, and lay field to field,* till there be no place that

they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth. Isa. 5. 8.

And St. James reads such but a tragical Lesson, pronounces a fearful Sentence, and tells us of but a lamentable End of the rich Man's Happiness, Jam. 5, 1 to 7. He tells him, he had *lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton*; he had nourished his heart as in a day of slaughter; he had set it upon the sorry Delights and Joys of the Earth, liv'd delicately and riotously, like the rich Man in the Gospel: And what is all this, but the pampering himself for Destruction, adding Fuel for the Wrath of God to work upon, and feeding himself for eternal Ruin?

And certainly this can be reckon'd no Character of a wise Man: For then was the rich Man wise, Luke 16, whose only Care was confin'd to his sumptuous Fare; and the poor Man the Fool, whose Hope terminated where his Soul was settled, in *Abraham's Bosom*.

If Folly be not Wisdom, and Wisdom Folly, if they have not chang'd Sides, this Head is plain enough.

But

But farther, let us consider, what Benefit we can expect from Riches in this World, and then we may easily discover what we are to hope from 'em hereafter. Will Riches remove the Aches and Pains of our Bodies ? Will they settle and compose the Disorders of a frightened and terrify'd Conscience ? Will they silence its Lashes and blunt its Stings, or ease the violent Twitches of it ? Will they cure our Afflictions, or remedy our Distresses, or heal those Troubles to which all Mankind are so commonly expos'd ? The Heathen Poet himself was so wise as to know this, that *non aeris acervus aut auri agroto Domino deduxit corpore febres, non animo curas,* — that Money cou'd neither qualify the outragious Heats of a Fever, nor cheer up a disconsolate Mind. They cannot ; those Grievances lie beyond the Power of their Vertue to redress ; notwithstanding all the celebrated Vertues of the *Aurum Potabile*, (tho' it does not concern me to gainsay its Qualities, we will suppose it, however, a harmless Medicine) yet, as the World generally uses Gold, 'tis by no Means medicinal, but serves to en-

crease our Cares and Troubles, and to heap on a greater Load of Uneasiness upon our Mind ; and when we expect most Help from it, it generally fails us, or, however, leaves us craving in the most plentiful Enjoyments of it.

It can never remove the Infirmities of Sickness, or the Pains of Distempers attending old Age, much less satisfy the Desires of a rational Soul, or relieve Infirmities of Sickness, or the Pains of the Distresses of a troubled Mind.

If we depend upon it, it will certainly fail us ; and we may frequently make Observations of Men much happier in a lower Orb and meaner Circumstance, much healthfuller, and more content, that pass their Lives on much more comfortably and delightfully than (I think I may say) Kings that sit on their Thrones, and the greatest and richest Potentates upon Earth.

To speak the Truth of Riches, as the World stands, a competent Quantity of 'em is necessary to carry us thro' the World ; but a State of an equal Distance from Poverty, and too great

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Abundance, is the most eligible State to a wise Man—And therefore this is the Prayer of a wise Man ; Give me neither Poverty nor Riches, but feed me with Food convenient for me.—For which he gives a good Reason afterwards, i. e. that extreme Poverty (the first of these) is apt to put Men upon unjust Methods for getting a Living ; and the latter, is Riches, to withdraw Mens Hearts from God, and to set themselves in the Place of 'em, and to possess themselves of that Share of our Love and Affections, which we owe to God alone.

They make Men to trust and confide in 'em, and to settle their Hopes and Expectations on 'em :

Which whatsoever Man does, it is a great and fatal Mistake ; 'tis leaning upon a broken Reed, which is much more likely to pierce his Hand thro', than ever support him.

'Tis trusting to a Thing that will forsake us, and that, too, in our greatest Need ; for Riches certainly make to themselves Wings, and fly away from us, and disappoint us, or, if they

do not, we shall soon fly away from them ;

So that either they will leave us, or we must leave them ; and then I know not what Benefit we can expect from 'em, (I mean in having our Hopes and Expectations, our Desires and Love fix'd upon 'em) since we are to be no long, and it may be, short Companions.

Did any Man ever yet rely upon Riches, and was not disappointed and deceiv'd ? Did ever any Man yet make 'em his God, and was any better for his Choice ? No Man, I believe, yet, that ever did, but, upon a serious Question upon the Matter, (even after his longest Tryal of 'em) would make Answer, he might as well have made Wood or Stone his God, as Gold, for any Benefit he found by it, to the satisfying the longing Desires of his immortal Soul.

There is no Difference of a wooden or a golden God, for any Help they can afford their Votaries in Time of Need, for any Comfort or Delight they can give to a distress'd Soul.

Ps. 135. 18. The Psalmist gives no great Character, either to those that make such Gods, or to those that put their Trust in 'em.

They that make them are like unto them, and so are all they that put their trust in them ; — that is, they are as senseless as the very Idols they adore, as Stocks and Stones, or senseless Matter ; so that, in plain Terms, without making any more Words upon the Matter, they are very unthinking Fools.

So that it may deservedly be said of 'em as it was of *Doeg*, when their God has disappointed or forsaken 'em, and they fallen into Misery and Ruin, *Lo ! this is the man that took not God for his strength, but trusted in the multitude of his riches.*

This is that miserable and deceiv'd Man ! Now he is ruin'd and undone for ever.

And whatever wicked Men say against the Just and Godly, perhaps flout him in the Words they did our Saviour, when they see him in his Misery, — *He trusted in God, let him deliver him now if he will have him ;* yet such a Man has made a good and rational Choice in

making God his Hope, for he has a sure Friend, that will not fail to help him in Time of Need : He has made the best Choice in the World ; he has fix'd his Faith, his Confidence, his Hope, in an Object that will fully answer all his Expectations, that will not only deliver him out of all his Calamities, but will take him to himself, and to Glory and Pleasures that flow from his Presence for evermore.

But I shall enlarge too much upon this Topick in its improper Place. — Of this more hereafter.

I come now to shew you when Men may be reckon'd to fix their Hopes of Happiness upon deceitful and unsatisfy'd Objects, upon the good Things of this World.

And this is no hard Matter to be done, nor needs it a long Disquisition ; For,

Whatever it is that engrosses the greatest Part of a Man's Time, and the best and intensest of his Thoughts, and Studies, and Endeavours, his Soul, and the ardentest Desires of it, may be said to be the Object of a Man's Hopes and Confidence. Whatsoever a Man fol-

follows with that Earnestness, and Affection, and Love, wherewith we are to prosecute Religion, and aspire after God, *with all our hearts, with all our minds, and with all our souls, and with all our strength,* or with such Intentions, in all these, this, whatever it is, has the greatest Bent and Stretch of our Souls and Desires.

In a Word, whatever is uppermost in our Desires, we make the Object of our Hope.

If good Meats, if Drinks, if Gold, if Lust be the uppermost in our Desires and Hearts, and not subordinate to Religion and God, that is the Object of our Love, and consequently of our Hope ; so that this is a certain Criterion, or Sign whereby we may judge when any created Thing is our Hope.

I come now in the 2d Place to shew you, that 'tis the greatest Prudence to make God and Religion our Hope, and Aim, and utmost End : And this is sufficiently apparent ; for if it be Folly and Indiscretion to choose any Creature for our Hope, our End and Centre, 'tis evident, that 'tis the best and

and wisest Course to make God our Hope:

A Centre there is somewhere, either in the Creatures or the Creator, for the Soul to rest upon, to which it turns, as naturally as the Needle to the Pole.

This Centre is not to be found within the Circumference of Things created; it must then be in that Being which has a Centre of Happiness every where, and his Circumference nowhere.

As for that Good which we singled out under the last Head, and whose Vanity we then represented, the Scriptures assure us, that *he that covets silver, shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loves abundance, with increase: and that that is vanity;* for the Beholders of 'em have no Geod of 'em while they have 'em, but *the beholding of them with their eyes.* Eccl. 5. 12.

Doubtless, then, 'tis the wisest Course any Man can take, to choose and persue that for his Hope where he may be assur'd of Satisfaction; and certainly this Satisfaction is to be found no where but in God, who is the End
of

of our best and rational Hope; and in Religion, the rational Means that leads to this End.

The Means which lead on to the End of our Hope, settle and strengthen our Hope here by the Comforts they yield in the Journey and Passage : They are of that Excellency, that they satisfy and content us here, before Hope come to be swallow'd up in Enjoyment : So sweet a Thing is the Practice of Piety, that it makes every Thing, even the hardest Difficulties, easy to be born : It tempers the Mind in Prosperity, (when it is apt to be swell'd with Pride, Haughtiness, and Insolency) with Humility, Meekness, Modesty, Sobriety, Compassion, Charity, Mercy : It guides our Tongues with Prudence, it seasons our Conversation with Salt and Grace, to the Edification of the Hearers, Eph. 4. 6. and teaches us so to look to our Way, *that we offend not in our Tongue.*

It sways and regulates our Actions and Demands, so that they may be innocent and beneficial to others, as extensively as our Powers will reach, and be hurtful to none ; and, doubtless, this must make a Man amiable in the Sight

Sight of others, certainly of all good Men, and procure the Veneration even of the worst ; and this Religion, rightly practis'd, as well as profess'd, will do.

It will take away, if not the Occasions and Exertions, yet the Excesses ; and take away the Heat and Ebullition of all Railing, Bitterness, Anger, Malice, Uncharitableness, Murmurs, Grudges, and all the Brood of that Kind ; and renders a Man (instead of a *Nabal*, that one cannot speak to) gentle and kind, tender-hearted and patient, and as useful as he can to all Men ; It will make him careful how he spends his Time, that he redeem it to the Honour and Glory of his Great God and Saviour ; it will make him tenderly to observe his Day, and to spend it in his House, and serious in Prayer and Thanksgiving, and hearing his Word with Reverence, Attention, and Resolution to practise what he hears, that it may bring forth in him the farther Fruits of good Living.

In a Word, it will make him godly, righteous, and sober, in his Life and Conversation.

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This is to be a Christian, and the Practice of this will be of unspeakable Satisfaction and Comfort to him that thus follows his Lord's Steps.

And certainly he is the wisest Man, that pursues that Course of Life which breeds no Disquiet, but takes it away, and leaves Peace in the Room of it ; that is follow'd with no Repentance, (the Plank after Shipwreck) but attended with the glorious and comfortable Retinue of Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost ; which also in any Visitation of God, in Affliction, Persecution, Weakness, and Sicknes, can with Patience and a cheerful Heart, and an unwavering and undoubting Faith in the Promises of God, resign his Will unto the Will of his heavenly Father, and receive with Thankfulness the Rod, as well as the Royal Robe and Crown of Righteousness:

So excellent and sweet to the Posseſſor, is the Exercise and Comfort of the Vertues and Graces of Religion in their own Nature, that none but a Fool, wou'd neglect 'em : Had they no other Reward assign'd 'em than that of their own

own Contentation and the Result of their own Pleasure.

But Christian Hopes contain far more Consolations than these ; if the Means be so fruitful in Good and Sweetness, the End is much more so.

Temporal Blessings, according to the Measure of our Necessities, and the Use we shall make of 'em, is a subordinate End of our Hope.

Our Hope and Trust in God, by casting our Burden upon him, will certainly feed us, according to the Promise, Ps. 37. 3. *Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good, and verily thou shalt be fed : Delight thou in the Lord, and he shall give thee thy heart's desire : Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in him, and he shall bring it to pass : Hold thee still in the Lord, and abide patiently upon him : Hope thou in the Lord, and keep his Way, and he shall promote thee, that thou shalt possess the Land : For the salvation of the righteous comes of the Lord, who is also their strength in time of trouble : And the Lord shall stand by them and save them : He shall deliver them from*

from the ungodly, and save them, because they put their Trust in him.

And thus (as the Apostle says) Godliness has the Promise of this Life, but much more of that which is to come.

Godliness, with Contentment, is great Gain in this Life, in Death and after Death, at the General Resurrection, and the Great Day of Judicature.

The World, (at least as much of it as will carry him thro' it) and Life and Death, and Things present and Things to come ; all are the pious Man's, and he is Christ's, and Christ the Lord's, *1 Cor. 3. 22, 23.*

If then there be such a Thing as Wisdom, if the Sense of the most dignify'd Men, in all Ages, be not Madness and Folly, Religion must be the best, nay, the only Wisdom.

When Men therefore live thus, prefer and value the Ways and Means which lead to this glorious End, true Religion, the Honour of God, and of what relates to him in his Ordinances, before and above all other Things, take the greatest Delight in worshipping God in Prayer, in Thanksgiving, in hearing his Word, in partaking of his
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Ordinances, in an intimate Communion with him, and what is holy and good, and study to promote the Honour of the Great Lord of all ; this is a certain Mark or Note they make God their Hope, and are wise to Salvation.

And thus I have plainly shewn, that 'tis the greatest Wisdom and Prudence to make God our Hope, and when we do so.

From the former Head, namely, the Vanity of making any created Being our Hope, we learn to sit loose to the fleeting Joys, and fugitive Delights and Shadows, and sham Enjoyments of this World ; not to value any Thing we at present possess, beyond the just Value or Worth of it.

We none of us prize a Glass, or earthen brittle Vessel, which is shatter'd and broke by a rude Blow, or a careless Hand, at the Rate we do our lasting Gold and Silver Plate ; yet this it is to fix our Affections so firmly and close to any earthly Enjoyment, that we cannot be parted from it ; but we part with our Hope and our Happiness, when such fix'd Affections are only to be fasten'd on Heaven, and heaven-

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ly Things ; I do not say we must be totally unconcern'd, as to worldly Things, Accidents, or Losses ; for this supposes rather an Inseparability of human Nature, or the extinguishing the Sparks of an animal Life rather than Religion. But the Business and Duty of Religion, is to regulate our Desires about the Things we possess, so that we value 'em no farther than they are needful and convenient ; and as in this World all Men are and will be expos'd to Losses and cross Accidents, yet Religion ought so to govern our Minds, that we may not be impatient under 'em.

The Losses we are subject to in this World, are either of Persons or Things ; if the Loss be of Things, we must consider that God design'd it for a Trial of our Patience and Reliance on his Providence, *whose the Earth is, and the Fulness thereof* ; or because he saw it wou'd have done us some Harm to have had it longer. And this we may be assur'd of, if the Use of it be best for us, we shall have it restor'd in Specie, or something equivalent : if it be not, our hea-

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venly Father sees 'tis not expedient, or best for us.

If the Loss be of Persons, as is very common in all Parts of the World, we are to remember, the Loss will not be so great as we think of; we must follow ourselves, in a small Time; and if the Departed were a faithful and pious Christian, or an innocent one, our only Way to regain his Company, to our Comfort, is to live up to our most holy Religion, that we may overtake him in Heaven.

Whatever God bestows upon us, therefore, let him, without our Repining, deprive us of when he pleases; if he take one Thing away, he will give us something better: Let him take away whatever we possess, so he give us himself; let him take away the Gift, so he give us the Giver; for God is all in all, and he can never be poor who possesses him who possesses all.

From the second Head let us learn so much of the best Sort of Wisdom, as to value God and Religion (the Means which leads to his Enjoyment) above all the World, and tenderly regard whatsoever has any Relation to him; and

and to say, in Truth and Reality, our Hope and our Happiness is in the Lord; and let us prove this we say in Word, to be true in Deed and in Practice.

Alas! what a sad Thing will it be to any of us, that when we come to depart this Life, and leave the Burden of our Flesh behind us, and of all other worldly Goods, we must be forc'd to leave out Joy, the Delight of our Eyes, our Hope and our Happiness, nay, our God behind us? That our Hopes must be bury'd in the Grave, never to have a Resurrection, tho' our Bodies have? We have all great Reason to consider our spiritual Estate, how it stands towards God, and to be assur'd, as far as we can; and that we may so far be assur'd, by the former two Rules, as to remove all Scruples, Irr-solutions and Doubts from our Mind; I say, we had all need to take all imaginable Care, and be assur'd of a future Hope upon good Grounds in our Healths, when we may without Distraction do it.

We have great need to set our Accounts strait, *before we go hence and be no more seen*, and keep 'em as even as

we can while we stay here, for fear of an unexpected Surprize.

Not every one that sayeth unto me Lord, Lord, &c. but he that doeth the Will of my Father, &c. which is in Heaven.

Every one of you, therefore, consider, in every Action now in your Health, What am I a doing ? Is this Action I am about, the Will of the Lord ? I do the Will of the Lord in my lawful Vocation and Calling, but does not the Lord call me to be actually engag'd in his Service ? Is it not a Time wherein I may and shou'd be occupy'd in God's Worship ? If I be doing no Evil, am I doing any Good for my own Soul and others ? If not, I am doing Evil, in not employing my precious Minutes, Abilities, and Powers to so necessary an End. Do I make God my Hope, my Trust, my Confidence in all my Actions, and do I propose him as the End of 'em all ? If I do, then I act like a wise Man ; but if I do not, wiser Persons have been confin'd to Chains and a dark Room.

Wherefore be ye not unwise, Brethren, but, understanding what the Will of the Lord is, for the Lord's Sake, and

and for your own Souls Sake, for your own greatest Interest and Concern : God and Christ are happy without us, and will be so, tho' we be miserable.

But it is not the Will of the Father and Son, we, or any, should perish, but that all should have everlasting Life ; else wou'd not they have taken that Care and Pains both have laid out, to the End that Men should be happy in the Enjoyment of their Glory in Heaven.

To which happy Place may the Prudence and Wisdom of a religious Life, and the Choice of God for our Trust, our Hope, our Confidence, conduct us for the Sake of Jesus Christ.



A

S E R M O N.



Mark xiii. 37.

*And what I say unto you, I say unto all,
Watch.*



IS not at all improperly, that the State and Condition of a Christian in this World, is represented under the Notion of a State of *Warfare*.

Hence it is that St. Paul exhorts him, in his *I Ep. 6. 12. To fight the good fight, to lay hold on eternal life.*

For

For we have many Enemies to engage with, who will with all their Force dispute our Passage to Heaven and Happiness.

Therefore the Apostle, in the last Chapter to the *Ephesians*, charges his *Ephesians* to be strong in the Lord, and the power of his might, v. 10, &c. — Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. And for this Reason it is that the Church of Christ on Earth, is called the Church Militant.

For the Way to Heaven is strew'd with many and discouraging Difficulties, beset with potent and vigilant Enemies, who are maliciously bent upon the Ruin and Destruction of Christ's Church, and let slip no Advantages of doing it all the Mischief they can.

They lay Briers and Thorns in our Way, to render it uneasy to us, and at other times entertain us with sensual Pleasures and Delights to make us for-

get our Journey and Business : So that every Christian that means to come ever at Heaven, had need have both great Courage and Conduct, Resolution and Vigilance, to travel to this Land of *Canaan*, when he will meet with so many Difficulties, so many Giants in the Way.

The Devil and his Instruments endeavour to block up every Avenue of Heaven, to hinder and prevent his ever coming there, and maintain their Posts against him with so much Power on the one Hand, so much Cunning and Subtilty on the other, that the Christian must be very stout and valiant, very circumspect and watchful, and greatly skill'd in all the Arts of Spiritual Warfare, to make a good, safe, and secure March to the Land of Happiness, to the Kingdom of Heaven.

If Men be not constantly upon their Guard, they are easily seiz'd by the Devil, and carry'd away captive at his Pleasure ; and tho' they be constantly upon the Guard, yet there is no small Art and Conduct requir'd to baffle and disappoint the Devices and Wiles of this strong Man arm'd, to give him the Foil and

and triumph over, to resist him with such a Christian Magnanimity and Resolution, as that he will fly away from us, and permit us, without any farther Attempts, to make the best of our Way to the promis'd Land.

And tho' 'tis not impossible for a Man to recover himself from the Snares of the Devil, after he has been once entangled, tho' it must be own'd by all who have thus fallen into his Hands, a Task of much Labour and great Difficulty, ever to make their Escape, and regain their former Liberty — Yet however possible and practicable it may be to get out of it, to continue in his Bondage and Service must be a Thing of the greatest Hazard and most dreadful Consequence.

We have all our Tasks and Duties assign'd us by God, and as we fulfil and practise these, we shall only be accepted of him, or rejected and punish'd at the Day of Accounts.

And because this Day is the most uncertain, as to the Time when it shall be, tho' the most certain Thing in the World that it will be.

It may be at a greater or a lesser Distance from us ; it may be some Years, or it may but be some few Months, or Weeks, or Days, or perhaps not many Hours or Moments distant from us. —

Therefore it is most excessive hazardous to be at any time from the Practice of our Duty : For in the mean time that Day may overtake and surprize us in our Sins, and in absolute Disobedience to God, and in the Slavery of Satan and our Lusts and Passions.

And if it be our Misfortune to be found at that Day in the Devil's Possession, then there's an End put to all farther Hopes, and we are like to continue in it.

If, when the Son of God comes to judge the World, we be not found upon Duty ;

If we be not found discharging the Offices of Religion, which are commanded and injoin'd us ;

If we be found neglecting the proper Work and Busines that we came into the World for ;

If we be found misemploying the Talents which God has put into our Hands,

Hands, and entrusted us with the Management of;

If we be not found provided, by all Vigilance and Watchfulness, against this Great Day, we shall be cut in funder, and have our Portion appointed with Hypocrites ; *there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.* Matt. 13. 51 *What therefore I say unto one, I say unto all, Watch.*

It is not the Duty of one Man more than another, but 'tis the indispensable Duty of all to watch.

If any Man expects to go to Heaven, he must use great Care, Diligence, and Watchfulness : Slothfulness and Negligence will bring no Man thither.

For the Life of a Christian is a Life of much Action, Pains, and Industry, and he has a mighty Care and Concern upon his Hands.

I. We must use our utmost Care and Abilities to do our Duty towards God.

II. We must use the more Care and Diligence, because we have so many Enemies to prevent us in our

our most diligent Search and
Prosecution of Happiness.

III. Because the Danger of our being unready and unprepar'd against Judgment, unless we be very wary and cautious, are so evident and manifest, and the Consequence so terrible and intolerable, it behoves us, in a high degree to be watchful, and the much more so, lest the Day of the Coming of our Lord to Judgment happens in a Time when we do not expect it, and surprize us before we think or are fit for it.

¶ **I.** We must use our utmost Care and Abilities to do our Duty towards God.

Every Christian must not only know this to be his great Duty, but that 'tis so indispensably necessary, that he can never be saved without it.

This is the chief and principal Duty, and which indeed is the Foundation of all others.

If we practise this sincerely and truly, we can never fail of being good Christians,

stians, never fall short of any inferiour and subordinate Duties of Religion.

He that reverences and fears the Lord as he ought to do, cannot fail to obey and keep his Commandments. And that no Man can be said rightly to fear the Lord, who doth not keep his Commandments, is plain: For how does he fear the Lord, that violates and breaks his Commandments, when he knows God hath declared, that he will and is sufficiently able to punish him for it.

Hence it is that the Fear of the Lord is so highly commended and exalted in the Holy Scriptures.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that do thereafter, Psalm 111 10
And to the like Import is to be found in several Places of the Bible.

The Reason of which is, that Fear is such a powerful Principle, that when any Man truly fears and reverences God, he cannot possibly be a bad Man.

Hence it is that the Children of Israel, when they truly reverenc'd the Lord, acknowledg'd and own'd him to be the only true God, said, with one

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Consent,— All that the Lord commandeth, we will do.

We can never reasonably, nor can we have the Boldness to make a Stand at the observing of God's Commands, if we really believe him to be cloath'd with all the Attributes of an Almighty self-subsisting Being, of infinite Perfection, and, in a Word, God.

Let us therefore possess our Hearts with a real Fear and Reverence of God, admire him for his Greatness and Majesty, love him for all the Expressions of his Goodness to us, adore him, because to him alone all Honour and Glory belongeth, because he only is worthy of all our Praise and Worship, and because to him appertaineth the sole and absolute Power of destroying both Body and Soul; therefore let us dread him above all Things, and therefore let us obey; nay, we must obey his Commandments, unless we will act besides our Perswasion and Belief;

Which wou'd be such a rebellious and foolish Practice, that wou'd deserve to be branded with the eternal Disgrace of Impudence and Folly, as well as it will

will be surely tormented with the eternal Pain of Punishment in Hell

But to discharge our Duty rightly, and in an acceptable Way to God, as it is the Whole of Religion, so it must contain in it all the Difficulties that attend a religious Life.

I call our Duty towards God the Whole of Religion, because I understand by it not barely a Belief in God, a Service, Worship, and Adoration of him, but likewise the Payment of a just Obedience to his Commands; for this is necessary to be done before we can serve him, and honour him rightly, as God.

So that, as I said before, all the Difficulties in Religion lie in the right Discharge of our Duty to God; for subordinate Duties are comprehended in it.

So that our main Care and Business is, how rightly to please him; and this is to be done, not only by owning and worshipping him as God, but likewise in fulfilling all his Commands in relation to our Neighbour and ourselves also, for we are equally oblig'd to these, to pay him due Service;

And

And herein we must shew our greatest Watchfulness and Wariness, least we fall short of what he demands of us in any Particular.

We must be very vigilant and careful that our Hearts be rightly dispos'd, and that therein we harbour no wrong Notions of God and his Providence.

This was the great Fault of the Heathen World, Rom. i. 21, &c.—Because, when they knew God, they glorify'd him not as God; neither were thankful, but became vain in their Imagination, and chang'd the Glory of the incorruptible God into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beasts, and creeping Things; and this was the great Sin of the Children of Israel, as you may read in the 32d of Ex. and Ps. 106. 20, They changed their Glory into the Similitude of an Ox that eateth Hay. They forgat God, their Saviour, which had done great Things in Egypt.

They complain'd, and murmur'd against the Dispensations of the divine Providence, as if he that had promis'd to take sufficient Care of 'em, either wou'd not, or cou'd not, fulfil his Promise.

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Let us therefore form right Notions and Ideas of God, — *God is a Spirit, and those that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth, Joh. 4. 24.*

Let us have due Apprehensions of his Providence, of his Omnipresence, and of his Almighty Power, to do whatsoever he pleases ; and then, if we constantly bear in Mind that this God, whom we serve, is every where, sees all our Carriage and Demeanour to him when we transgress, or when we obey his Commands, and has promis'd us Happiness, or denounc'd the heaviest Threats of Vengeance, according as we obey or disobey 'em — If any Thing will, this must make us careful of all our Actions, wary, vigilant, and watchful to keep within the Bounds of Duty.

This must make us always upon our Guard, by keeping up an Awe of God in our Hearts, to diligently observe the fulfilling of thofe Commands, the Violation whereof is sure to be attended with such grievous Punishment.

What therefore I say unto one, I say unto all, Watch ; take all possible Care, use your greatest Diligence to keep up

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a due Fear, and Reverence, and Awe of God upon your Minds. — For he that will but do thus, dare sure never be any other than a vertuous and good Man.

This will be a mighty Means to preserve us from being drawn from our Duty by our own carnal Lusts and Inclinations, for thereby we shall be abler (as having an over-ruling Awe of God upon our Hearts) to check, rule, and govern these, and keep 'em within the Compass of Duty.

Hereby we shall be in a better Posture and Condition to withstand the Allurements and inviting Temptations of the World, to despise its Pleasures, and contemn all its Glories.

And hereby, alone, we shall be sufficiently arm'd to hold out against the more open Assaults, or more cunning Insinuations and Suggestions of the Devil, that grand Adversary of us all, and of the Happiness of us all. — Which brings me to the 2d Head, namely, — That we must use the more Care and Diligence, since there are so many Enemies to prevent and disappoint us of our Happiness,

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If our Happiness was to be gain'd upon the Observance of the divine Commands, and if there was little or nothing to hinder us from the fulfilling them, then there would not be Occasion for so much Watchfulness and Care, but a moderate Industry and Diligence might secure it.

The Way to Heaven would not then be so strait, but we might arrive there upon much easier Terms and Pains than now 'tis sufficiently known we can.

But since there are so many Snares and Traps laid in our Way, to prevent our ever coming there.

Since our own Lusts and Passions are none of the meanest of our Enemies, nor the least apt to mislead and misguide us.

Since the World joins its Charms and Allurements, and the Devil his Subtilty and Cunning; for we are not ignorant of his Devices.

Therefore it is, that we must here double our Guard, act with the greatest Prudence and Caution, watch with an unwearied Diligence, march with the utmost of our Care and Circum-

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spection, least we be misguided and decoy'd into the Way that leads down to Hell and the Chambers of Death, whilst we are in Quest and Search of Heaven.

Unless we keep up that Fear and reverential Awe of God and his Commands, which I before mention'd, it will be a most difficult Thing for us to guide and govern our Passions, to restrain our Lusts, our perverse Inclinations and Desires, which usually have so powerful an Ascendant over us, that 'tis by no small Pains and Labour, no moderate Diligence that they are to be kept in.

If we wou'd humour and comply with all the Demands of our Appetites, we shou'd soon lose ourselves and our Souls, we shou'd serve them in the first, and God in the last Place.

'Tis no hearing of their Arguments and Invitations, for if we listen but to them, they will soon grow upon us, to be guided and govern'd by them; and they wou'd become too violent and furious to be held by any Ties of Religion.

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We must therefore reject their Petition at the first offering of it, and never give it any Hearing.

This is Dr. Taylor's Advice:—“When any Temptation to Sensuality or Uncleanliness assaults thee, do not resist it, by heaping up Arguments against it, and disputing with it, considering its Offers and its Danger, but fly from it.” i. e. Think not at all of it, lay aside all Consideration concerning it, and turn away from it by any severe and laudable Thoughts of Business.—And this is agreeable to what St. Austin says, *Contra libidinis impetum apprebende fugam, si vis obtinere victoriam.* Banish out of thy Mind the very Thoughts of thy lustful Inclination, if thou expects to come off Conqueror.

St. Jerom very wittily reproves the Gentiles Superstition, who painted the Virgin Deities arm'd with a Shield and Lance, as if Chastity cou'd not be defended without War and direct Contention.

No, this Enemy is to be treated otherwise: If you hear it speak, tho' but to dispute with it, it ruins you;

and the very Arguments you go about to answer, leave a Relish upon your Mind.

A Man may be burnt if he goes near the Fire, tho' but to quench his House; and by handling Pitch, tho' but to draw it from your Cloaths, you defile your Fingers.

And this is very agreeable to the Scripture Expression, *resist the Beginnings of Sin*; for if we suffer it but to parley with us, and calmly hear what it can say for itself, 'tis a great Odds if we be not overcome.

Let us therefore give no Entertainment to the first Motions and Beginning of Sin. *Qui blandiendo dulce nutravit malum sero recusat ferre, quod subiit jugum.* For if we do but wholly suppress any evil Thoughts or Desires, they die.

But if we permit the Furnace to breathe out its Smoak and Flame at any Vent, it will burn to the Consumption of the Whole; — But this Cockatrice is soonest crush'd in the Shell; if it grows, it turns to a Serpent, a Dragon, and a Devil.

2dly,

2dly, As we must be careful of our own Hearts, that no evil Thoughts, or worser Inclinations be lodg'd there, as we must be diligent, that our carnal Appetites, our Passions and Affections do not over-power our Reason, and tempt us to commit Sin ; so we have as mischievous and dangerous outward Enemies to deal withal.

The World is full of divers Kinds of Allurements and Temptations, which, to resist and deny ourselves of, requires no small Skill and Resolution, Policy and Prudence.

The Honours of this World lead us to be Ambitious, inflame us with a Desire of Greatness and Dominion, of Power and Command,

And to this Purpose all our Designs, Plots, and Contrivances, are directed.

This becomes the only End we aim at in all our Actions.

To this we sacrifice all our Interests, how considerable soever.

This we hunt after and pursue, with such a restless Activity and Earnestness, as if the Acquisition and Attainment of it were the ultimate End and Consumption of our Happiness.

To gain this, we spare neither Pains nor Expences, nor the Reputation and Lives of our dearest Friends, nor often our own, but are minded to step up to it, if it be not possible by less cruel Means, by the Ruin of all about us.—

The Riches of this World have no less Charms and Temptations than the Honours of it, and are as great Adversaries to the Practice of all the Parts of our Duty, and consequently to our Happiness.

Twould be a Labour to reckon up all the sordid and base Actions that a covetous Desire of Money puts Men upon.

When a Man is set upon this, no Obligations can hold him ; but he will break thro' all Laws, Divine and Human, all Equity and Justice, to serve his Ends of Gain.

This is a Temper that will listen neither to Reason nor Right, Honesty nor fair Dealing, but esteems the Doing of any Thing right and just enough, if it make but for Lucre and Interest, for Profit and Advantage.

Perjury, tho' it be a notorious Abuse and Affront upon God, a dissembled Use of his Name, to counterfeit and conceal our Designs.

Injustice to those we have Dealings with, tho' it be absolute Fraud and open Wrong.

Extortion, tho' it be plain and apparent depriving, and violent robbing People of their just Right and Properties, seem all just and holy enough in the Eyes of the covetous and worldly minded Man, if he can but get anything by them.

Profit and Gain is his Religion, and he makes Use of no Religion for any other Intent and Purpose.

For Gain he would betray his nearest and dearest Friends, and do the greatest Mischief to those from whom he has receiv'd the greatest Kindnesses, if by doing them a Mischief he can but interest himself.

Thirty Pieces of Silver will invite a *Judas* to sell the most innocent Man, his own Master, and the Saviour of the World; and as small a Sum will tempt to the like Treachery still.

The

The covetous Man has the same Opinion of his Treasures that the *Israelites* had of their Golden Calf, *Ex. 32. 4.* *These be thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the Land of Egypt.* For these are his God, these he idolizes and adores, and forgets to pay any Worship to the true God.

We see therefore what are the dangerous Consequences of our Lusts and Passions, of the Temptations and Allurements of the World, if we give but Way to them.

Sensuality and Lewdness, Irreligion and open Profaneness, Malice, Hatred, Rapine, Murder, Extortion, Idolatry, and the like, a Number of most hellish and dreadful Vices.

If therefore we have a Mind of Heaven and Happiness, it behoves us, without any Loss of Time, to lay aside all Supineness and Incogitancy ; to shake off all Sloth and Drowsiness, and with the greatest concern and care to fortify and secure our Hearts, that none of these bewitching Pleasures, none of the World's Glory or Wealth, by their importunate Invitations, and counterfeit Charms, steal away our Affections from

from God, and our Care for our Soul's Health.

'Tis no small or mean Care that will do this ; 'tis a continual Conflict, and striving against our carnal Lusts and Appetites.

'Tis the maintaining of our Hearts sound against the Invasion of any enticing Pleasures, or worser Thoughts, against the lovely and inviting Charms of Riches.

The Love of the World will break in upon us, unless we be constantly upon the Watch. Never was any City more closely besieged than we are ; we had Need therefore be diligent to keep out the Enemy ; if we have but any narrow Passage open, he will enter in at it, and spoil us ; nay, we have such unruly and rebellious Passions within us, which, if they be not kept under strict Discipline and Command, will certainly ruin us, by betraying us into the Hands of our most inveterate and unmerciful Adversary the Devil ; and the Devil himself is one of our greatest Enemies ; and our own perverse Inclinations and ungovernable Lusts, all the Allurements and Temptations

tations of the World, are only his Instruments, whereby he makes his Ends of us, in ruining us.

And this should be a Motive to make us in an extraordinary degree vigilant, sober, and watchful; because this Adversary is not only potent and strong, but is likewise subtle and cunning, and constantly lies in Ambush for us.

I am sure the Apostle argues after this manner, to encrease our Watchfulness
Be sober, be vigilant, because your Adversary the Devil walketh about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour.

He is never idle or unactive, spares no Toil or Pains to ruin us; he is officiously busy about us, to do us what Mischief he can, and circumvent us, to invite and tempt us from our Duty and the Concern of our Souls. The young Man he persuades to enjoy the Delights and Pleasures of this World, to gratify his Lusts and Passions, to indulge his Palate in all the Delicates and Sweets which Nature offers, and Lewdness, Luxury, and Sensuality prompts to.

Tells

Tells him this is the only Time for him to make himself happy in this World; and that if he let this Time slip, all the Pleasures which he may enjoy now, will become tasteless and insipid, dull and flat.

This is the Doctrine that he preaches to him, *Rejoyce, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and the ways of thine eyes—* But he never tells him what will be the sad Consequence of all this—*that for all these things God will bring him to judgment—* but on the contrary tells him, that the Sins of Youth are venial and pardonable, and God will pardon them, and receive him into Favour at any Time.

Old Age he has so fast in his Net, that there's small Hopes of their making their Escape. He has his Artifices and Devices to keep them off from Repentance and Amendment.

He either tells them 'tis now too late, and therefore involves them in Despair; or he flatters them with the Hopes of a longer Life still, so that they will have Time enough to reform hereafter, and sue

sue out a Pardon for their Sins. Or if their Time should happen to be short, he produces them Millions of Examples that have made the like Venture, and that they may expect to escape in the Crowd, and come off as well as the rest, which (by the bye) will but be a most sad and dismal Come-off, — *to be damn'd for Company.*

If therefore we have a Mind to secure our Happiness, and to disappoint all the Designs of this our great, and powerful, and restless Enemy, in what Part or Time of our Age soever we be, whether in Youth, in our full Strength and Vigour, or in old Age, the Confines and very Brink of the Grave, it behoves to be watchful, sober, and vigilant.

We must never slacken our Care, for the Care we can take will all be little enough.

Thirdly, and lastly, we should be extraordinary diligent and watchful, because of the Uncertainty of the Time when our Lord and Saviour will come to judge the World. For if we be unprepar'd at that Day, and unfit for

Judg-

Judgment, we shall be lost and undone for ever.

God hath undoubtedly fix'd upon a Time in which he will judge the World, as you may read, *Acts 17. 31.* not to mention any more, tho' there are numerous Texts to this Purpose. And a great Part of this Chapter, from whence I chose the Words for this present Discourse, as it has relation to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, so in like manner to the Day of Judgment, which, because it would come suddenly and unexpected, our Saviour therefore charges us all to watch and be prepared against it.

I know, as Men are apt to put the Thoughts of Death, so likewise they are apt to put the Thoughts of Judgment, far from them; but still however far off we may think the Day of Judgment, yet that does not put it at any greater Distance from us.

The *Jews* were as subject to think themselves and their *Jerusalem* safe and secure, yet we know in how true and dreadful a Manner our Saviour's Predictions concerning it were fulfill'd.

Their

Their City and Temple were totally destroy'd and ruin'd, and the Relicts of that miserable People scatter'd and dispers'd throughout the whole World.

And this may be a sufficient Warning and Argument for us to believe our Saviour's Words, when he foretells the Judgment of the whole World.

A great many Men questionless do believe that the World shall be judg'd and call'd to a severe Account; but since they do not know the Time when it will be so, they are inclinable to hope it will not happen in their Time; and therefore they have a Mind to live easily, and not to torment and disquiet themselves with the Thoughts and Considerations of it.

But then all these Hopes are groundless, unreasonable, and foolish, if we remember, that the Doubtfulness of the Time wherein it shall happen and come to pass, may give us just Grounds and Reason to suspect, that it is much nearer to us than we are aware, and perhaps ready to surprize us.

When any Misfortune or Evil will certainly befall a Man, it would be the greatest Imprudence, and the Height of

of Distraction, not to provide and arm himself against it.

It is in vain to use Precaution, and offer Remedies for the Prevention of an Evil that has actually befallen us.

'Tis Nonsense to prescribe Medicine to incurable Distempers.

A wise Man will, as soon as he finds his Body indispos'd, and tends to a desperate Disease, seek speedy Remedy, and not defer it till the Physician, whom call'd for, can discover nothing but the sad Symptoms and melancholy Prognosticks of approaching Death.

Good therefore is the Advice of an Heathen Poet,

venienti occurrite morbo;

fortify your Body against the Invasion of Distempers; permit them not thro' Negligence to ruin your Constitution and Health, and to procure inevitable Destruction.

Let us therefore now take all possible Care about the Well-being and Health of our Souls.

If they be then sick and distemper'd, when our Saviour, tho' he be the great Physician and Healer of Souls, comes and finds them in this sad and miserable Condition, he will not nor can give them any Cure, Remedy, or Relief, but must pass the Sentence of Eternal Death upon them.

And because we know nothing of the Time when he will come to judge the World, and reward Men according to the Condition and State he shall find their Souls in, (for of that Day and Hour knoweth no Man, *no not the Angels in Heaven*, Joh. 5. 28.) therefore we should make it our chief, nay only Business, to put ourselves into such Circumstances, fit our Souls for the Cure and Remedy of Sin, that the great Physician of our Souls may do us Good, perfectly heal us, and deliver our Souls from the evil Consequences of that dreadful Day: For he can give us no Medicine that can work for our Good and Health, if we by our Endeavours do not dispose ourselves for it.

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